SCRUTINY

REISSUED IN 20 VOLUMES
WITH AN INDEX AND
RETROSPECT

VOLUME XVI
1949

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

XVI

1949

CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1963

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PUBLISHED BY
THE SYNDICS OF THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Bentley House, 200 Euston Road, London, N.W. 1
American Branch: 32 East 57th Street, New York 22, N.Y.
West African Office: P.O. Box 33, Ibadan, Nigeria

First issued quarterly at Cambridge 1932–53
Reissued in 20 *volumes, with index* 1963

Printed in the United States of America

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Vol. XVI. No. 1 MARCH, 1949

SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by
L. C. KNIGHTS H. A. MASON
F. R. LEAVIS

CONTENTS

Page

MEASURE FOR MEASURE: OR ANGLO-AMERICAN EXCHANGES, by *H. A. Mason* 2

THE COLLOQUIAL MODE OF BYRON. by *Marius Bewley* 8

THE MORAL BASIS OF POLITICAL CONFLICTS, by *Morris Ginsberg* 23

CORRESPONDENCE from *Boris Ford* 35

THE CASE OF JOHN WEBSTER, by *Ian Jack* 38

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

D. H. LAWRENCE PLACED, F.R.L., and Letter from H. Coombes (p. 44). CULTURE AND DR. JOAD, by R. C. Churchill (p. 48). A NOTE ON CONTEMPORARY 'PHILOSOPHICAL' LITERARY CRITICISM IN FRANCE, by H. A. Mason (p. 54). PURITAN BUNYAN, *John Bunyan: L'homme et l'œuvre* reviewed by Maurice Hussey (p. 60). MR. ELIOT AND EDUCATION, *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* reviewed by G. H. Bantock (p. 64). AMERICAN CRITICS AND POETIC DRAMA, reviews by R. G. Cox (p. 71). CROSS-CURRENTS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY MUSIC, records reviewed by W. H. Mellers (p. 75). *'Humanitas'*, Note (p. 80).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MEASURE FOR MEASURE: OR ANGLO-AMERICAN EXCHANGES

DR. BETSKY, writing with an authority to which I cannot (and did not) pretend, while apparently taking me to task, confirms the main features of the situation to which my heterogeneous collection of 'documents' seemed to point. The charge of bordering on complacency, however, came as a disagreeable shock to me, the more so as it was made by one quite obviously without unfair animus. Indeed I would be content to submit to his courteous strictures without further comment did I not believe that by amplifying one or two of the points I tried to hint at rather than to make I could dispose of the complacency charge or at least isolate the area of difference in 'valuation' which may be detected in Dr. Betsky's unambiguous (though occasionally it would seem, self-contradictory!) 'comment and reply' and may have provided the grounds for the wounding accusation. On the other hand, as I was not aware of exhibiting complacency in the 'Note', the taint may lie beyond my power to detect or eradicate. At the same time there is no doubt in my mind that complacency on either side would effectively prevent the understanding I believe can be reached and which would prove extremely beneficial to the English side (Dr. Betsky is kind enough to suggest ways by which the benefits might become mutual) in Anglo-American exchanges at *Scrutiny* level.

In my note I referred to the possibility or desirability of 'civilization-wide unity'. It may help to clarify matters if I recall some of the relevant facts. Dr. Betsky complained of the absence in the note of point-for-point comparison between the American and English 'scenes' and justifiably wondered from where I drew my comfort in reflecting on the literary world in such a centre as London. I simply took it for granted that English readers (for whom all my meagre scraps of borrowed information were intended) would supply the comparisons from the abundant stock of facts available to any reader of current English literary periodicals and what passes for literature in the judgment of the contributors to those periodicals. There is, notoriously, no comfort to be derived from even the most fragmentary acquaintance with the state of letters in England. Dr. Betsky will have noted in the number of *Scrutiny* in which his comment appeared a reference to the 'embarrassment facing anyone who is concerned for the contemporary function of criticism'. The embarrassment is in part a measure of the relative success obtained in creating a public for whom there is no further need to amplify the analysis made in the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

early numbers of *Scrutiny* of the system whereby our self-styled betters virtually govern unchallenged through a network of 'interlocking directorates'. But if none of the readers of this journal requires reviews of, say, the productions of Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene or V. S. Pritchett or needs reminding of the activity of these novelists in critical journalism, if the reader can supply his own comment on the phenomena connected with the recent canonization of the Sitwells, there is equally hardly a reader who does not meet in daily life with some evidence of the way in which the ramifications of the system choke his path and the extent to which in polite circles the *Scrutiny* opinion is still a minority opinion. Nor are there wanting siren voices inviting one to make things easier all round. 'After all', it is said, 'you have to recognize that we intellectuals (if you must use the word) are all in the same boat. Faced with governmental indifference and the alienation of the masses, we should pull together. We have the same concern for values (though we are less strident about it than you). And places could be found where your valuable contributions would resound to greater effect than in your self-chosen isolation'. Polite rejection of these well-meant overtures earns the epithets 'humourless', 'narrow', 'Puritanical', 'presumptuous', 'intolerant', 'hypercritical', 'unattractive', 'lacking in charm'. To fail to be impressed by Auden, Spender, Dylan Thomas *et hoc genus omne* and to say so in public is described as 'fouling the nest'.

In these days of restricted travel it is less a matter of common knowledge that cultural exchanges between the various centres of our civilization (which may be defined geographically as the area covered by the sales of the English, Italian, German and French language editions of *Readers' Digest*) are largely in the hands of the very people who govern at home and their 'opposite numbers' in other lands. A glance at the translations of English authors for sale in the bookshops of any foreign capital will reveal the channels through which contact with England is maintained. Five minutes' conversation with a foreign 'intellectual' on his reading in modern English literature yields the same names even when the foreigner himself goes to the originals. The 'coverage' of English literature in foreign reviews, when not entrusted to an English representative of the 'system', is regularly inspired by the dominating group. Of course, there are exceptions. I have been approached quizzically by cultivated foreigners with, 'Is Mr. Morgan (or Mr. Spender or any other fashionable name among the literary people who visit foreign capitals privately or as delegates) *really* the best you have to offer?'—or 'Can you explain to me just *what* makes Rosamund Lehmann (or Elizabeth Bowen or I. Compton-Burnett) a distinguished writer?' It is striking that authors of greater interest, if not carried by our distinguished travellers in literary wares, remain unknown abroad. The foreigner does not spontaneously prefer, say, Graham Greene to L. H. Myers. He hears only of the former and takes him as representative of the best the English can manage in the 'philosophical novelist's' line. It is equally striking

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that, as a general rule, our literary travellers bring home wares similar to those they have recommended abroad.

The bearing of these facts on any attempts made on behalf of *Scrutiny* to establish fruitful relations with other centres will be obvious. It has become extremely difficult to discover who are the significant authors in any foreign country and it is almost hopeless to expect a disinterested examination of our own authors by foreign critics. What can still be done is, perhaps, to study the intellectual climate in the centres that characterize our civilization. The significant varieties which may be discovered not only enrich our sense of the values we strive to keep alive at home, but provide a measure by which we can see ourselves as more or less removed from an ideal 'centre'. It may be true that the foreigner could profit by noting what is written in *Scrutiny* of the situation in England. I hardly think it likely that our 'foreign coverage' would prove enlightening to the native on the spot and it has certainly never been offered with such immodest pretensions.

That the U.S.A. presents for us the significant variety from studying which we are most likely to derive profit in the ways I have just outlined, has long been my conviction, and to judge by the volumes of *Scrutiny* it would seem that a similar conviction is pretty generally shared by *Scrutiny's* editors and contributors. The study of the cultural history of literary America would still be profitable even if we had not such admirable helps as are provided by Henry Adams, Henry James, Edith Wharton, George Santayana and Malcolm Cowley. (My 'note' was partly intended to point out the need for a continuation down to the present of *Exile's Return*). Contact with America is equally vital for the other reason I mentioned. We look to the lively critics in that country to tell us when our Emperor is naked. In the article to which Dr. Betsky referred I wrote, 'One of the happiest features of *New Republic* reviews for English readers is their immunity from respect for established English values'. America has long since ceased to accept dictation of its values from a London group, however powerful the hold of such a group on the moulding of opinion in England. Yet, I had to report in the same article, 'there is observable a distressing tendency to take over Bloomsbury values without question'. That was in 1939. Since then Edmund Wilson and others have shown that critical independence is possible.

Dr. Betsky, however, warns us against expecting too much. Whereas (he says in effect) the American critic is much livelier and much more devastating than the English critic when faced with an obviously immature American writer, when faced with an obviously immature English writer, such as Stephen Spender, 'writers for *Scrutiny* . . . would note in American magazines the uncertainty of evaluative judgment'. Why is this? Can it be that the English writer derives prestige in American eyes from crossing the Atlantic accompanied, as it were, by the echoes of a chorus of praising English critics? The American publishers would seem to think so. At least, a writer in *The Hudson Review* reports that, 'Along with

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Graham Greene's new novel, Viking has supplied a booklet of gratuitous information for reviewers, on the cover of which, bordered by a bilious grey-green, is a sepia portrait of the novelist. Inside, a number of his English colleagues make liberal use of the adjective "great" '. The American publisher's advertisement of *The Song of the Cold* by Dr. Edith Sitwell (taken from *Partisan Review*) quotes from a review by John Lehmann (her English publisher) in the *New York Times Book Review*. *Horizon*, it will be recalled, sponsored the 'British Edition' of *Partisan Review*. The November 1948 number (American edition) of *Partisan Review* might be considered, with only slight exaggeration, an 'American edition' of *Horizon*. It contains an extract from an autobiographical work in progress[1] by Stephen Spender (reminiscences among other things of Auden at Oxford) and an extract entitled 'The Creative Life in Our Time' from a longer correspondence between Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene and V. S. Pritchett. Further parallels under the heading 'Over here—over there' might be made. For instance, the reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* of F. O. Matthiessen's second, revised and enlarged, edition of *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* writes ' . . . the book, in spite of revision, seems here and there out of touch with present opinion. For instance, it is no longer usual to cite Miss Edith Sitwell as an example of the less effective aspects of modern poetry'. Whether the rest of America has moved with the (English) times I have not yet heard. The only 'document' I have to hand is a photograph taken from an American magazine[2] showing Dr. Edith and Sir Osbert Sitwell sitting in a New York bookshop and, as the caption tells us, receiving the homage, not only of the only other Englishman present, Mr. Spender, but also of a group of American poets and poetesses, including Mr. Auden, and with one of the two associate editors of *Partisan Review* in the foreground. The December 1948 number of *Partisan Review* contains a report of an interview with Sir Osbert, which if it is not an elaborate *mystification*, will surely have astonished Dr. Betsky. Since the English public has failed to support the 'British edition' of this journal and many *Scrutiny* readers will not have access to this number, I append a few snippets: ' . . . his autobiography is one of the most highly personal documents since Rousseau's *Confessions*, though without any of its indiscretions . . . '. 'At fifty-six he is a very imposing figure. Tall and slightly stooped, he has a dignity and calm, which, at the cost of a cliché, can only be

---

[1] *The Life of Literature*.

[2] *Life*, Dec. 6th, 1948—in which we read (it may as a matter of curiosity, be recorded): 'Edith is a candidate to succeed John Masefield as Poet Laureate, Osbert is literary adviser to Queen Elizabeth. In her book, *The Song of the Cold*, Edith takes her place among the topmost modern poets. With the just-published fourth volume of his autobiography, *Laughter in the Next Room*, Sir Osbert has not only hit the American best-seller list, but has also produced a classic chronicle of an amazing family'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

described as Olympian'. Sir Osbert's views, as reported, are in keeping, but this is not the place to reproduce them. The interviewer concludes, 'Whatever one's personal assessment of his judgments it is impossible not to admire a man who, both in his work and in his personal life, has fought so hard and with such pleasing results for standards above the common'. (If this is the American equivalent of *pince sans rire*, I must stand convicted of lack of appreciation).

Dr. Betsky will accuse me of a frivolous want of balance (there have, to my knowledge, been voices on the other side) if I continue at this level. Our area of difference does not begin *here*. Before approaching nearer, however, I should like to touch on a further observation concerning *Scrutiny*. 'It has failed in recent years to report American poetry and novels'. This failure was not due to contemptuous neglect. There were material difficulties, of course, during the war years. But reading was done 'with a view to reporting' during those years and yet no reviews appeared. Here I must confine myself to my own share. Of the novels and stories that came my way (with the exception of *Go down, Moses*) not one seemed to me worthy of special mention and the list included *All the King's Men* and *The Middle of the Journey*, which I single out as having, in my opinion, been praised in both countries well above their merits. As for poetry, I can only wonder how much of the output of the last ten years Dr. Betsky will find himself re-reading in ten years' time.

When I come to Dr. Betsky's long list of critics (itself, apparently, a short selection) my embarrassment reaches its height. I can't pretend not to be acquainted with most of the names he puts forward. Indeed favourable mention has been made of some of them in these pages. Fortunately, I can refer Dr. Betsky to the article in the last number of *Scrutiny* by his distinguished compatriot for a placing of one, at least, and not the least prominent, of these figures. For the rest, I can only appeal to Dr. Betsky to institute relevant comparisons in the light of his own sober critical standards. Does he not, for instance, detect an enormous difference in the quality of Edmund Wilson's criticism and that of, say, John Berryman? Perhaps Dr. Betsky was over-insistent in the face of my apparent complacency? It is no easier to engage on the merits of American literary periodicals. If we balance American and English periodicals off against each other, the *Virginia Quarterly* against, say, *The Nineteenth Century* or *The Dublin Review*, etc., and proceed to exhaustion, are we left with anything beyond *The Kenyon* and *The Sewanee*? Of the other reviews I have seen, *The Hudson*, for instance, does not seem so far to have found a *raison d'être*. In surveying the journals I know I put to myself two simple questions. In the course of a year or so, how often has a challenging and convincing critical article appeared or how often a piece of model criticism that could be placed with profit in the hands of students? The *Nation* does not come at all well out of this test.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Once through this awkward Scylla and Charybdis which I saw no possibility of evading we emerge into a larger field of appreciation. Dr. Betsky does not seem to guess with what *brotherly* feelings his account of the plight of the American intellectual will be read by many *Scrutiny* readers, particularly those who have lived in environments where the money pressure is intense or where the contempt for the schoolmaster's career is extreme. (Of course, one comparatively hopeful conclusion does emerge. If some of the best of our younger critics have been formed in spite of unpropitious surroundings, part of the credit must go to English educational institutions, richly as they may have deserved Dr. Betsky's strictures). Dr. Betsky has largely *done* what I merely intended. He has shown that the plight of the intellectual is indeed similar in both countries and that advantages and disadvantages lie on both sides of the Atlantic. Now that I have (I hope) indicated how little I feel that English people have cause for self-congratulation I should like briefly to refer to the indebtedness, large and extensive, already incurred towards the free, generous, disinterested spirit of enquiry exhibited by the best American writers. It is in a sense 'academic' to enquire whether fruitful two-way contacts can be made. They *have been* made, as can be seen from the excellent articles by Americans in *Scrutiny* and the contributions of *Scrutiny* writers to American periodicals.

If I may be allowed to 'clinch' the argument by a particular case I would refer to the review by Jerome Salzmann of Mr. Bentley's selection from *Scrutiny*. Mr. Salzmann, while unequivocally welcoming the 'revaluations' of established classics, draws the line and tries to explain away the unflattering treatment of Auden, Connolly, Virginia Woolf, etc. Yet (I should have thought) the same critical insight and power of discrimination were at work in dealing with past as with contemporary writers. If the critic spontaneously recognizes merit in one set of articles, surely also in the other—? It would be the same with the most challenging questioning of the articles on established classics. The same fruitful and valuable challenge should be given, one would think, in the field where we have no established values to fall back on, where first-hand judgment alone can help. We look to America for a courageous consistency and disinterested handling.

I have left for final consideration a point surprisingly not made by Dr. Betsky. One of the great services which might be expected of a country so rapidly renewing itself at every moment would be the emergence of a fresh point of view. The critics in both countries now at the height of their powers received the decisive shocks from, let us say, D. H. Lawrence and T. S. Eliot. Naturally, the very much inferior work of the poets and novelists who first appeared in the 'thirties was judged severely by men and women who had come to maturity partly by living through the work of these greater figures. The function of criticism during those years involved rejection by the standards set up in that earlier time of the great mass of subsequent literary output. I have not heard a convincing

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appeal against the broad lines of this rejection. But the critical faculties are undoubtedly numbed by constant repudiation and there is a danger (which we can never safely ignore) that the emergence of genuine new talent might be overlooked. Again, the successful application of a critical method calls for increasing vigilance as the years pass. The capacity for self-criticism has its limits however resolutely practised. Why should the graftings and cross-fertilizations not come from the America one senses over the horizon? The process need not be strictly dialectic, but perhaps by the application, in a sort, of, measure for measure?

H. A. MASON.

THE COLLOQUIAL MODE OF BYRON

I.

IT would be conceded by most critics that the poems in which Byron made his most substantial contribution to literature are *Beppo, A Vision of Judgement,* and *Don Juan.* All three exhibited a new tone that struck and charmed Byron's readers from the first. Jeffrey did an excellent job of isolating this tone in his review of *Beppo* in the *Edinburgh Review* for February 1818. Remarking enthusiastically on the style, he says that its ease and gaiety imply

> '. . . the existence of certain habits of dissipation, derision, and intelligence in general society . . . It is perfectly distinct both from the witty, epigrammatic and satirical vein, in which Pope will never be surpassed—or equalled; and from the burlesque, humourous and distorted style which attained its greatest height in *Hudibras* . . . The style of which we are speaking is, no doubt, occasionally satirical and witty and humorous—but it is on the whole far more gay than poignant, and it is characterized, exactly as good conversation is, rather by its constant ease and amenity, than by any traits either of extraordinary brilliancy, or of strong and ludicrous effect . . . The great charm is in the simplicity and naturalness of the language—the free but guarded use of all polite idioms, and even of all phrases of temporary currency that have the stamp of good company on them . . .

This is excellent criticism from a man whose merits are sometimes obscured, and it is criticism that Mr. Bottrall (who seems to have been unacquainted with the Jeffrey review) writing in *The Criterion* in 1938 could do little more than substantiate and enlarge in his essay entitled 'Byron and the Colloquial Tradition in English

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poetry'. The author of *Beppo* (Byron had published it anonymously) has presented us, Jeffrey had said, with 'about one hundred stanzas of good verse, entirely composed of common words, in their common places; never presenting us with one sprig of what is called poetical diction, or even making use of a single inversion, either to raise the style or assist the rhyme—but running on in an inexhaustible series of good, easy colloquial phrases, and finding them fall into verse by some unaccountable and happy fatality'. To Jeffrey the tone of *Beppo* had seemed a complete innovation ('—unique we rather think in our language'), and the nearest approach to it he could think of was Prior, Peter Pindar, or Moore in the facetious vein.

It is an unusual thing about much Byron criticism that having isolated predominant virtues in Byron's work, sometimes with a good deal of sensitivity as in the Jeffrey review, critics have had a tendency to look upon these qualities as an anomaly in the English tradition. Byron's apparent intractability is partly due to the impact of his personality on the somewhat narrow imagination of much traditional criticism rather than to the impact of his actual poetry on a responsive sensibility. Despite what the vaunters of the Italian influence may hint to the contrary, his poetry is intensely English; but a shock like that felt by Scrope Davies and Byron's estimable friend, John Cam Hobhouse, when the first cantos of *Don Juan* reached England (a shock that was to be widely and deeply shared), seems somehow to have implanted the persistent idea that there is something slightly alien about Byron's modes of feeling. Even Matthew Arnold's admirable estimate is influenced when he sees Byron so largely against a background of continental evaluations, and sets him up as so largely the opponent of British Philistinism. With Arnold on Byron I should not wish to quarrel, but his emphasis does underline the situation. And Mr. Eliot is in the tradition (but on the whole, less amiably) when he writes in his essay on Byron: 'He was right in making the hero of his house-party a Spaniard, for what he [Byron I take it, not Don Juan] understands and dislikes about English society is very much what an intelligent foreigner in the same position would understand and dislike'. Yes: but surely an intelligent Englishman also. This remark of Eliot's is enlightening from several points of view, but it also suggests that Byron doesn't quite 'belong'. The snub is gentle (perhaps *not* when read in the full context), but it is effective.

What occurs in Byron criticism occurs also in much Byron scholarship. Mr. Claude M. Fuess in his *Lord Byron as a Satirist in Verse* is typical when he writes that *Beppo* may be taken as marking the turning point between the old era of Augustan influence, and the new one to come. 'It is significant', he continues, 'that this poem is written, not in the characteristically English heroic couplet, but in the thoroughly foreign ottava rima. Responsive to an altered and agreeable environment, Byron found in Italy and its literature an inspiration which affected him more profoundly than it had Goethe only a few decades before. The results of this

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

influence, shown to some extent in his dramas though more decidedly in his satires, justify terming the years from 1817 until his death his Italian period. A mere mention of its contribution to satire indicates its importance: it produced *Beppo*, *A Vision of Judgement*, and *Don Juan*'. But Fuess then rather amusingly admits: ' . . . we may feel convinced that Byron drew from the Italian satirists something of their general tone, and yet be unable to clarify our general reasons for this belief or to frame them into an effective argument. Of such a sort, indeed, is much of the influence which Pulci, Berni, and Casti had on Byron. It is vague and evasive . . . '

In line with the Italian 'influences' one other may be mentioned, and it must be confessed that Byron himself is largely responsible. In 1817 he wrote to Murray: 'Mr. Whistlecraft has no greater admirer than myself. I have written a story in 89 stanzas, in imitation of him, called Beppo'. The poem in question was, of course, John Hookham Frere's wooden and worthless *Prospectus and Specimen of an Intended National Work* purportedly written by the brothers Whistlecraft. Since Frere was a student of the Italian burlesque writers this admiration of Byron's has been seized on by a good many scholars for anything they can make of it, with the result that Byron's greatest works are coupled in print with a title that can do little more than obfuscate their real merits and hide their real intentions. This is not to say that Frere's work, his use of ottava rima for example, may not have been suggestive to Byron, but his usefulness was mechanical and it has been critically misleading.

Against this background Mr. Bottrall's attempt to insist on the traditional English quality in Byron must evoke sympathy. But Jeffrey in noting the sharp distinction between Byron and Pope had been perfectly right. It is therefore unfortunate that in setting up what he calls a 'colloquial tradition' for the purpose of securing Byron firmly to native bedrock Mr. Bottrall runs the tradition from Dryden through Pope. He makes the best of the case by emphasizing *not* Byron's couplet poems, where the evidence would be weakest, but the later, richly colloquial poems. Yet his argument, when carefully considered, is not equal to the force of Mr. F. R. Leavis's note in *Revaluation*. 'The eighteenth century element in him', says Mr. Leavis of Byron, 'is essential to his success, and yet has at the same time the effect of bringing out how completely the Augustan order has disintegrated'.

In the following pages I wish to go a little further and suggest that Byron not only represents the deterioration of the Augustan order, but that his colloquialism (that aspect of his genius which is of interest here) sideskirts the Augustan Age altogether, and refers back to *certain* Caroline poets. One may as well begin one's argument by freely admitting that had Dryden and Pope never written we might not have *Beppo* and *Don Juan*. But that would not be because Byron was using effects taught him by the Augustans. Pope was a stimulant on Byron's imagination, but they belong to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

different orders. There is very little eighteenth-century influence in Byron (if one excepts the couplet poems, which used to be grossly over-estimated); but more important, Byron came to write a kind of poetry with which Pope's manner could not consort except in a superficial and disengaging way.

If Dryden and Pope had not written we might not have *Beppo* and *Don Juan*: but the language had already arrived somewhat earlier than Dryden at a stage of sophistication equal to achieving effects that we recognize as characteristically Byronic in those two poems. Any language can be perfectly equated, of course, *only* with the contemporary life for which it speaks, but the advances in language which *Don Juan* represents over these early poems (which must be examined later) should be accounted a personal achievement on Byron's part: for what Dryden and Pope added to increase the resonance of those specific colloquial effects the earlier poets had invented was of a general nature—a broad deepening of the resources of language. Without knowing it Byron was in touch with a remoter vein than he supposed; and so if one cannot agree with Mr. Bottrall's 'colloquial tradition' one need not thereby suppose that the peculiar success of *Don Juan* is an anomaly, except insofar as that term is applicable to every original work of art. It may just be possible to show that, after all, Byron *does* 'belong'.

II.

But here I should like to take out several pages parenthetically for general comment. Mr. Bottrall's use of the phrase 'colloquial tradition', engenders a moment of hesitation and doubt. When he mentions on the second page of his essay that Langland, Skelton, Chaucer, Dunbar, Henryson, Donne, Herbert, Dryden, Pope, Hopkins, Eliot, and Pound are, in *some* of their poetry, colloquial, one certainly agrees—but hastens to question if the phrase does not embody a paralyzing inclusiveness insofar as literary criticism is concerned. By appearing more exact and narrow than it is it might easily prove misleading, and one reflects that Mr. Bottrall himself has constructed a line (Dryden, Pope, and Byron) on the strength of what seem superficial colloquial resemblances.

The fact is that whenever a language achieves a high degree of sophistication in a particular mode, an ease and assurance in saying those things which the civilization it speaks for thinks most worth saying, that language has a centrifugal tendency to fly outward towards colloquialism and freedom. But there are as many different kinds of freedom as there are different kinds of language. Colloquialism isolated from the conventional language structure over which it plays has little interest or vitality. Its value lies in the peculiar illumination, the subtlety of emphasis it brings to the underlying forms and tropes of language at any given time, and the colloquial tone is continuously re-defined through a span of time by changes in these conventions. For if the colloquial character has certain principles that remain more or less constant, there is

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ceaseless change going on within the structures of language, in reaction to which colloquialism has its being. It might be objected that this is partly a verbal difficulty. Possibly: for I do not think that Mr. Bottrall's term is useless, but dangerous. The essential gist of my objection could be stated like this: A colloquial tone or rhythm always has specific reference to the *particular state of the language* (and the vast theatre that phrase implies) with which it is taking liberties; its reference to its own continuous tradition is only a glancing one. In other words: The moment of operation for the colloquial mode is an insistent present with very little of the past inheritable *under its own name*.

The best way of seeing how particular restraints and the particular freedoms generated by them produce entirely *new* colloquial overtones is to examine some one poem in which the process can be observed. I have chosen Richard Lovelace's unusual and beautiful 'La Bella Bona-Roba' for that purpose here, but I am alive to some objections that might be raised against the choice. For example, it follows the rhythm of the thinking rather than of the speaking voice—at least to some extent. However, I am not convinced that this distinction cuts deep, and it may be disregarded for the present purpose:

I cannot tell who loves the skeleton
Of a poor marmoset, naught but bone, bone:
Give me a nakedness with her clothes on.

Such whose white-satin upper coat of skin
Cut upon velvet rich incarnidin,
Has yet a body (and of flesh) within.

Sure it is meant good husbandry in men,
Who do incorporate with aery lean,
T'repair their sides, and get their rib again.

Hard hap unto that huntsman that decrees
Fat joys for all his sweat, whenas he sees
After his 'say, naught but his keeper's fees.

Then, Love, I beg, when next thou takst thy bow,
Thy angry shafts, and dost heart-hunting go,
Pass rascal deer, strike me the largest doe.

There is a curiously modern flavour about some of the above stanzas (one even thinks vaguely of the American poet, Wallace Stevens, though he could do nothing as fine), and possibly only then does it become clear how essentially different in structure, and consequently in the quality of delight offered, this poem is from anything that could be written to-day. Its deceptive modernity is based on the movement of the thought (almost stream-of-consciousness) through the words in such a way that there is an intimate familiarity bred between thought and speech convention; but these conventions mould the form of the familiarity, the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intimacy, what one dares call the 'colloquialism', to a countenance that is not at all 'modern'. This interplay should be scrutinized closely.

Consider the reflective repetition of 'bone' in Stanza 1. The slight elevation of tone in the first line is at once brought into intimate touch with the thought as that reflective repetition accurately reproduces the pattern of the thought's operation. The singularity of the opening figure, 'skeleton of a poor marmoset', has a strangeness that is acceptable at once because it is so profoundly personal. In the hands of a modern poet such a figure would have strong Imagist tendencies as in Stevens's

> Above the forest of the parakeets,
> A parakeet of parakeets prevails,
> A pip of life amid a mort of tails.

But Lovelace's figure is not devised, and it is not artificial, either in our pejorative modern sense or in the Elizabethan sense of a made thing showing craft. It is organic in the poem as a whole, for it is in this opening figure that one strongly feels the whole poem has its origin. Its effects are everywhere, and not least in the magnificent immediacy of the third line. In the second, third, and fourth stanzas the rhythm continues to mirror the activity of the working mind with considerable subtlety, and the terse directness, the 'colloquial' spareness, of many of the words is effective. Several of the figures are of a somewhat homely variety, but woven with sureness into the courtly fabric. Thus, 'Fat joys for all his sweat', 'T'repair their sides', and 'keeper's fees' look back to the best imagery in Jacobean dramatic writing. These middle stanzas are certainly colloquial if one is permitted to define 'colloquial' as an effective, familiarly free gallantry of language with its own syntactical and decorous proprieties. But with Stanza 5 the real reason for taking this poem of Lovelace's as a good example of the point to be made becomes apparent. Stanza 5 represents a decided shift in imagery. The sinuosities of personal thought are here ironed out in a highly conventional development. But Stanza 2, one now recognizes, had represented an anticipation of this conventional resolution, and in Stanza 5 one has the delicious recognition that one has already been prepared for this change in tone. And vice versa the *new tone* looks backward in retrospect across the preceding stanzas until it locks hands with Stanza 2, and so exerts its authority, humbling the intervening 'colloquialism' to a different and new cast or expression. The transitions (and *effective* colloquialism is largely a matter of transitions, even if they are only implicitly present) have a perfect understanding of the whole situation. The conventional 'white-satin upper coat of skin' and the conventional clothes images have been pre-cursors of the exquisite double pun in 'heart-hunting' and 'rascal deer'—exquisite, of course, chiefly in this context. For the highly artificial pun has been approached down avenues of murmuring colloquialisms that have induced a mood in the reader which, now focusing

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on the deftly introduced 'rascal', transforms this closing device, so uncolloquial in itself, into something intimately felt.

Even should one be inclined to cavil at the application of 'colloquial' to this poem, preferring to reserve this term for something in a more strenuous manner, the pattern of restraint and freedom which lies at the heart of colloquialism is very evident here, and it may become apparent later on that certain other Caroline writers, by coarsening this mode and using it to encompass other intentions, wrote verse that sounds strangely pre-Byronic. But in self-justification I had better say here that I am not setting up an opposing 'colloquial tradition' from the Carolines through, let us say Butler, to Byron. But by understanding the mode in which these pre-cursors (to use a weighted word) of Byron were functioning it should be easier to approach a proper reading of *Don Juan*. And this is difficult as long as one thinks of it in an Augustan colloquial tradition.

III.

Just who were these 'pre-cursors'? One takes a hint from Saintsbury. Writing on the minor Caroline poets in the *Cambridge History of English Literature* he came to treat of that almost forgotten poet, Sir Francis Kynaston, who died in 1642 shortly after publishing his long (more or less mock-) heroic poem, *Leoline and Sydanis*. Referring to this poem, Saintsbury offers it qualified approval and remarks that it 'presents an early, a fairly original and a very interesting anticipation of "Whistlecraft" and *Don Juan*'. (One may forget 'Whistlecraft' without more ado). The poem has been reprinted only once since its original publication when Saintsbury included it in the second volume of his edition of *Minor Caroline Poets*. Turning to it there one finds a poem in which the colloquial element is used in a manner closer to Byron's than Dryden and Pope ever used it. The colloquialism has a certain raffishness that, although concentrated, never moves with a sense of corrective point, and its brand of negligence is more easy and more disreputable than was common with either Dryden (if we except the Comedies) or Pope. The poem has 3381 lines written in Rime Royal, and while it presents a sustained performance, the tone throughout is not always consistent with remarks I shall make about the passages quoted. And even when it seems nearest to *Don Juan* it does little more than provide a substantial base on which the greatest Byronic colloquial effects in verse were to be achieved. If these finest effects of Byron's poetry could be explained in terms of other writers they would not be worth explaining at all. In his essay on Byron Eliot quotes as 'first-rate' the following stanza from *Don Juan*:

> He from the world had cut off a great man
> Who in his time had made heroic bustle.
> Who in a row like Tom could lead the van,
> Booze in the ken, or at the spellkin bustle?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Who queer a flat? Who (spite of Bow-Street's ban)
On the high toby-spice so flash the muzzle?
Who on a lark with black-eyed Sal (his blowing)
So prime, so swell, so nutty, and so knowing.

Eliot rightly calls this something new in English verse; but the following stanzas from *Leoline and Sydanis* sound very much like Byron's manner in the earlier cantos where he has been writing at somewhat lower pressure:

XXIII.

But to the matter shortly now to go,
That day the Prince did wed his beauteous bride,
As then the custom was, he did bestow
Rich scarfs, and points, and many things beside,
Which in fine curious knots were knit and tied;
And as his royal favours, worn by those
Whom he to grace his royal nuptials chose.

XXIV.

Favours are oft, unhappily, by chance
Bestow'd: for 'mongst those courtiers that did wear
The Prince's points, a Marquess was of France,
Who for some heinous fact he had done there,
Hang'd in effigie, fled from France for fear,
And so for refuge to Carleon came,
Monsieur Marquis Jean Foutre was his name.

XXV.

Who though he had a farinee face,
Thereto a bedstaff leg, and a splay foot,
By angry nature made in man's disgrace,
Which no long slop, nor any ruffled boot
Could mend; or hide, for why they could not do't,
Though his mouth were a wide world without end,
His shape so ugly as no art could mend—

XXVI.

Although his weatherwise autumnal joints,
As if they wanted Nature's ligaments,
Did hang together, as if tied by points,
Though most deformed were his lineaments;
Yet fouler was his mind, and base intents,
His matchless impudence, which appeared in this,
That he made love to beauteous Sydanis.

XXVII.

So by the canker-worm the fragrant rose
Is tainted: so the serene wholesome air
By black contagion, pestilential grows,
As she by this base wretch, who thought to impair
The chastity of one so matchless fair;

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But his foul base intents being once detected,
Were with all scorn and just disdain rejected.

XXVIII.

In dire revenge thereof, that day the bands
Were made between Prince Leoline and his bride;
As the Arch-flaman joined had their hands,
And made them one, which no man ought divide,
Upon the Prince's point this caitiff tied
A magic knot, and muttered a spell
Which had an energetic force from hell.

XXIX.

For by it was he maleficiated,
And quite depriv'd of all ability
To use a woman, as shall be related,
For Nature felt an imbecility,
Extinguishing in him virility:
The sad events whereof to set before ye,
Is as the dire Praeludium to our story.

It will not, perhaps, be necessary to set a parallel passage from *Don Juan* beside Kynaston at this point, for the resemblances are fairly insistent, but certain characteristics may be commented on. There is, for example, the explicit impatience of the opening line; the familiar easy references to images of fashion and dress; the casually introduced morality which the speaker *pretends* to take seriously ('Who for some heinous fact . . . ', 'Yet fouler was his mind and base intents', etc.); the coined words ('farinee' is coined from the now obsolete farinous, and here means mealy-faced); the impertinent descriptions ('bedstaff leg', 'Did hang together as if tied by points', etc.); the affected gravity ('In dire revenge thereof . . . '); the irreverence (in the liturgical echo from 'his mouth were a wide world without end'); the double rhymes with their impudent emphases; the burlesque quality (*Monsieur Marquis Jean Foutre* was his name', and the action of the whole piece); the feigned and over-stated veneration for young females, resulting (when viewed in a larger context than the present quotation) in a poised cynicism towards romantic love; the ribaldry that masquerades as a sense of decorum. All these things add up to other more broadly significant resemblances. There is, for example, the vigorous sweep of the narrative, its jaunty and extravagant rhythm that recognizes no obstacles in the telling. Turning back to the opening of this paper to re-read Jeffrey's comment on *Beppo* one finds his description of that poem applies almost equally well to this passage from *Leoline and Sydanis*, and it is a passage that has many counterparts in the poem.

Despite these resemblances, however, and despite Kynaston's well-known admiration for *Troilus and Criseyde* (which explains the Rime Royal), the tone of the colloquialism is Carolinian. If the writing here is much broader, the intentions much coarser, than in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lovelace's poem, the free speech rhythms and the courtly conventions nevertheless interact in somewhat the same way as in 'La Bella Bona-Roba'. Stanza XXVII is a good place to examine this interaction.

The first two lines of the stanza are good in their own right—conventionally pretty. 'The serene wholesome air' recalls one of Kynaston's best short poems which begins:

> Do not conceal thy radiant eyes
> The starlight of serenest skies . . .

But if for a moment, in the first two lines of Stanza XXVII, Kynaston wishes to sound a note that is seriously effective in the Carolinian lyric convention, it is for the purpose of achieving a quite other effect in the stanza as a whole. From the third line there is a growing Spenserian heaviness in the imagery which I am sure is conscious and deliberate (for Kynaston was above all a *conscious* artist). One passes through 'black contagion', 'pestilential', and 'base wretch', until one can no longer doubt when we get to 'The beauty of one so matchless fair'. Having coarsened the beauty of his own Carolinian voice as it exists in the first two lines, he makes it progressively vulnerable to the light burlesque attack in the closing couplet, in which, had it been written by Byron, some critics might have detected an eighteenth-century overtone.

This control of Kynaston's over the verse of his own day, and a day preceding his own, is the means by which he achieves, on occasion, ironical effects of considerable delicacy. The opening stanza of *Leoline and Sydanis* may be quoted:

> Fortunes of Kings, enamour'd Prince's loves,
> Who erst from Royal ancestors did spring,
> Is the high subject that incites and moves
> My lowly voice in lofty notes to sing
> Of Leoline, son to a mighty King,
> And of a Princess, Sydanis the fair,
> Who were the world's incomparable pair.

The heaviness of that heroic, epic beginning is turned aside with delightful knowingness in the metrical shift of 'incomparable'. But in order to appreciate what Sir Francis has done here one should pick up Milton and read (preferably aloud) the opening of *Paradise Lost*.

The remarkable thing about Kynaston's use of such conventions is that the irony with which he transforms them into something new is invariably a sweet irony. The Spenserian influence in the following stanza becomes in his hands something new, and yet a good deal of the old Spenserian beauty remains under the warmth of the poet's courteous humour. The stanza describes the ocean-going chariot of Queen Amphitrite, surrounded by twelve Sea-Nymphs:

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Here I should tell you how this glorious Queen
> Sate in a chariot, no man's eye e'er saw
> So rare a one; her robes were of sea-green,
> Her coach four Hippopotami did draw,
> Who fear'd no gust, nor tempests angry flaw.
> But to describe things now I cannot stand,
> I haste to finish what I have in hand.

Kynaston worked out his style from Chaucer and Spenser, fusing them together in a particular way under Carolinian pressures. Byron, of course, did not like Spenser, and he told Leigh Hunt (who did like him) that he couldn't read *The Faerie Queene*, but that may have been for the pleasure of contradicting Hunt. At any rate, there is an occasional passage in *Don Juan* in which the effects of Spenser on the language may be felt, remote certainly, but as a not entirely unlocalizable impact. The description of Norman Abbey (XIII, 56 to 62) is such a passage. There is no need to make anything of this fact since the influence is probably quite indirect, but it is interesting to observe that the sources that shaped Kynaston's style in the seventeenth century can still be traced in fossil form in *Don Juan*.

I do not wish to suggest that *Leoline and Sydanis* would seem tractable or even agreeable reading to most people, except perhaps in patches. Mr. Douglas Bush in his *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century* says that it recalls the plots of Shakespeare's comedy and Shakespeare's sources. This is certainly true; but it also manages to suggest, by the recurrent colloquialism of its style and rhythm, specifically contemporary concerns. In a stanza by stanza commentary that Kynaston wrote on *Troilus and Criseyde* (and which, from a few extracts I have seen printed in a bookseller's announcement in 1796, appears to have a good deal of critical interest)[1] he observed: 'Some do not improbably conjecture that Chaucer, in writing the loves and lives of Troilus and Criseyde, did rather glance at some private persons, as one of King Edward the third's sons, and a lady of the court, his paramour; than follow Homer, Dares Phrygius, or any author writing the history of those times . . . '. It is impossible not to suppose, the texture and tone in parts of Kynaston's own poem being what they are, that he did not have Charles' court steadily in view.

---

[1]In the opening note of his Commentary Kynaston gives an amusing glimpse, which I have never seen quoted anywhere, 'of my most learned and celebrated friend Mr. Ben. Johnson', reading 'a most antient Grammar written in the Saxon tongue and character'. Kynaston has sometimes been ridiculed for translating *Troilus and Criseyde* into Latin rime royal, but it is important to remember that he was not playing tricks: he was seriously attempting to gain a wider audience for Shakespeare among the educated, and his Commentary makes it clear that he had a profound respect for Chaucer's original language that prevented him from turning it into contemporary English as Dryden was to do later.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Although the poem was published in 1642 it had probably been written several years before. As esquire of the body to Charles I, Kynaston would have been in the midst of talk and curiosity about the fashionable Platonic Love that the Queen had introduced from France. (Davenant wrote his *Platonic Lovers* soon after, in 1635, and literary repercussions were general, as the most casual acquaintance with the writers of the day will indicate). One of the main themes in the plot of *Leoline and Sydanis* was introduced in Stanzas XXVIII and XXIX, quoted above, and this theme is obviously intended as a broad burlesque on the court fashion. If additional evidence is needed one might read the three rather dull stanzas beginning with number XLV in which the symptoms of Platonic Love are carefully anatomized. It should be noted in all this courtly Platonic Love literature that the Carolinians exploit the fashion for the grace and elegance of conceit it allows them, and almost invariably they end by emphatically rejecting it. But their rejection is not the result of an Augustan 'good sense'. They merely turn the garment inside out by an elaborate verbal choreography of shifting tones and figures. What they aim at is not the correction of taste (although that is certainly implicit in their larger intention), but a highly skilled performance in which a cavalier can show his grace. Richard Steele's conception of the Christian Hero was still a long way off. But to say this is to slur over many difficulties, and sacrifice delicacy of distinctions for an easy generalization. The Court Poets were a various group scaling down from those like Carew who possessed some of Jonson's strength to others whose general licence extended as far as their rhythm and images. Even in such a broadly defined group Kynaston's interests may have been a little unusual, but his poetry related him, as it did the others, directly to contemporary life by virtue of its style, its colloquialism. It is this direct relation to life that makes the resemblances between a few of the passages in *Leoline and Sydanis* and *Don Juan* seem authentic, and not merely spurious likenesses as in the case of 'Whistlecraft'.

But Kynaston was not the only writer of his day in whom the colloquial freedom of word and rhythm produced overtones that suggest the Carolinian use of language could be like Byron's. Nathaniel Whiting is the most abused among the romantic epic writers of his day, but yet his kind of colloquialism has something like the interest one finds in Kynaston's poem. Saintsbury called his poetry 'uncouth jargon', and declared that *The Pleasing History of Albino and Bellama*, published in 1637, was 'graceless and slatternly'. This is excessive dispraise for Whiting has some very good poetry, but it is impossible to pause here for a defence. The intonation we are looking for may be a little more than fugitively glimpsed in the following stanzas. Bellama is telling her father why she will not marry the wealthy but objectionable Don Fuco:

> Bellama with a look fraught with disdain,
> (Though hatred did not make her anger bold)
> Says, 'Sir, I'm sorry you do entertain

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Such high conceits of folly hemmed with gold:
Think you no marriage good if equal lands
Be not matchmakers and do join their hands?

Don Fuco has ten thousand pounds a year,
With weighty titles would o'erload a mule,
A piece of arras finely wrought and dear;
But does he square his life to virtue's rule?
With vice as wealth, to countless sums he thrives,
But is, in virtue, full as poor as wives.

He knows to steer an horse and hollow hounds,
But not to guide his actions, less his tongue;
He speaks in state, but ev'ry sentence sounds
Of comic fragments or some tavern song.
And shall I him, hail'd by unworthy pelf,
Take to rule me, who cannot rule himself?

Shall I see other female vessels thrive
With mine own nectar, and they fee'd with money,
Whilst I like careful bee do keep my hive,
And work the comb for them to suck the honey?
No, I'll no sharers have in my delight,
I'll have it one and only, else good night'.

Certain stanzas from *Don Juan* come to mind immediately when one reads this verse. Choosing among the recollected alternatives from Byron to place beside this (and beside the Kynaston passage also) one would hesitate on passages like the description of Lord Henry Amundeville (XIII, 16 to 23) despite certain similarities because the instrusion of Byron's satiric genius would complicate the comparison. The following stanzas, and many others like them, would offer better grounds for judging. In Canto I Julia is berating her husband for jealousy:

'Yes, Don Alfonso! husband now no more,
If ever you indeed deserved the name,
Is't worthy of your years?—you have three-score—
Fifty or sixty, it is all the same—
Is't wise or fitting, causeless to explore
For facts against a virtuous woman's fame?
Ungrateful, perjured, barbarous Don Alfonso,
How dare you think your lady would go on so?

'Is it for this I have disdained to hold
The common privileges of my sex?
That I have chosen a confessor so old
And deaf that any other it would vex,
And never once he has had chance to scold,
But found my very innocence perplex
So much, he always doubted I was married—
How sorry you will be when I've miscarried!'

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is interesting to remark that when the above passages from Whiting and Byron are read together, Whiting seems to have more of the eighteenth century in him than Byron. His couplet

> And shall I him, hail'd by unworthy pelf,
> Take to rule me, who cannot rule himself?

might have been written by George Crabbe, which illustrates the danger of attaching too much importance to superficial colloquial resemblances.

IV.

Some general remarks and conclusions should be offered here. Whiting, although of interest to the argument of this essay, is not a Court poet (he was an Anglican clergyman from Queens' College, Cambridge,[2] who defaulted to Puritanism). Sir Francis Kynaston, however, occupies an unusual position. He was so conscious of the elegant requirements of aristocratic life that in 1635 he founded a kind of Carolinian progressive college for young nobles called the Museum Minervae to which Charles contributed £100 from the treasury. While the Museum was intent on keeping in touch with the latest developments in Science and Logic, insistence was placed on those silkier skills by which the innate aristocrat emerges through the duller flesh, and young cavaliers were taught behaviour, music, riding, and dancing, as well as modern languages, coins, heraldry, and antiquities. The full course required seven years, but doubtless a great deal of refined leisure was involved in the studies.

It may be prophecy after the event, but one fancies it is easy to detect something of the schoolmaster in Kynaston, albeit a very graceful one. His short poems, the *Cynthiades*, have been over-praised (at least by Saintsbury) at the expense of his epic. The single example that the *Seventeenth Century Oxford Book* contains is his best, and while the first two stanzas have a certain strength and vitality, the remaining five are only a skilled exercise by an intelligent and sensitive man who was in the fashionable know. Kynaston's control of the Carolinian 'light lyric grace' was pedagogic (reading his short poems one feels it was fitting, after all, that he should have remembered Jonson with an Anglo-Saxon Grammar in his hands)), and his real taste was for the archaic Spenserian mode. But here he could be a minor master, and he sometimes transformed Spenser's effects into something quite new.

[2]It was long thought that Sir Francis, after taking his degree from Oxford in 1604, had proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge, had taken his M.A. there in 1609, and had held the office of proctor in 1634. However, in 1932, an American discovered that the Cambridge Kynaston was another man who ultimately became a rector in Suffolk. It is a pity that on this occasion H. G. Seccombe's scholarly eye was so searching since it would have made an amiable picture to have had both Sir Francis and Lord Byron Trinity men—but perhaps the symmetry would have been a little vulgar.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is extremely interesting (and I think important) to compare what Kynaston as an elegant Caroline courtier could do to Spenser with what Milton some years later did to him. After Milton a poem like *Leoline and Sydanis* was out of the question, and when somewhat similar notes were struck in the language again it was by a poet who did not like Spenser, and who claimed never to have read him. But that poet significantly liked Milton (although Hunt relates that Byron once called attention to the fact he had no copy of Shakespeare or Milton in his library as an answer to charges that he had been influenced by those poets).

Milton claimed Spenser as his 'original', and though there is no doubt that Byron never read Kynaston, their poetry meets in an area of language where Spenser and Milton overlap. The important thing is that although differences of behaviour exist, both the Caroline courtier and the Regency nobleman conduct themselves with a certain mutually congenial recklessness of bearing within the given area.

What is the basis of this similarity of air between the two noblemen? One is naturally tempted to offer comparisons between the Carolinian Age and the Regency. There are obvious ways in which a Sir Thomas Lawrence resembles a Van Dyck more than a Reynolds resembles either. But the comparison is interesting only because it reveals how much the Regency had lost. Since *Don Juan* does not represent a loss one had better keep to Byron and leave the Age alone. There are at least two items about Byron of some importance that help to explain the Carolinian echoes. The first, which concerns his aristocratic attitudes, had better be by-passed here. If one notes the similarity in aristocratic styles, and the high degree of self-consciousness with which both men regarded the aristocracy, that is enough. The second is more interesting, and might profitably be made the subject of a separate essay. The Carolinians, we know, possessed a highly formal language, rich with rhetorical conventions and devices. The skill with which they used this language was suggested in the analysis of Lovelace's fine poem, and if 'La Bella Bona-Roba' is not entirely typical, on this score at least it may claim its representative quality. The formality of their language, and the definition which the Court provided for their attitudes enabled them, with this intricate instrument, to keep a certain distance between themselves and their feelings, a distance which allowed various shades of cynicism or detachment to circulate freely around their verbal statements. The effects that are achieved in this mode may cover a wide and complex range of feeling, but they are always distinct from effects in any mode in which the poet identifies himself with what he is feeling. These conventions (and they were identified by the Carolines with their language itself) were not formally accessible to Byron, but from the first he had built up a rhetoric of his own. One may not be impressed with this as it stands in *Childe Harold* ('The Isles of Greece', which is a fine thing, represents Byron's rhetoric at its best, and it is something quite different from the Carolinian mode), but in *Childe*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Harold Byron was already on his way to achieving a detachment which, when his state of mind changed (Lady Jersey's party is the convenient date, I believe) could be utilized in *Beppo* and *Don Juan* with entirely different effects. 'Childe Harold at a little distance stood', begins one of the stanzas in that poem, and it was that magnificent little distance between the word and its open-faced meaning that Byron managed to keep free in *Don Juan* for the insidious intention. And this was something the Carolines could do in the same way, but not the Augustans.

MARIUS BEWLEY.

THE MORAL BASIS OF POLITICAL CONFLICTS

I PROPOSE to enquire in this paper how far and in what sense the political conflicts of the present time involve a fundamental divergence in moral outlook. That there is such a divergence is widely held, though there is much difference of opinion about its precise nature. According to some the division is between those who attach ultimate value to the individual and those who attach ultimate value to the community. According to others the difference is between those who accept a universalist morality binding on all mankind and those who believe that moral rules are relative. Others again think that the difference is not about ultimate ends but that opposed views are held about the right relations between ends and means.

In approaching this question we have at the outset to face the view that moral differences, if they exist, are really irrelevant to the situation to-day. The forces engaged in the struggle for mastery are, it will be said, strictly amoral. No doubt both sides talk in moral terms and claim to be acting in defence of their rights. But this moral appeal is only made, so it is suggested, because it is psychologically useful, because it is recognized that people will not be ready for extreme sacrifices unless they are convinced that right is on their side. The moral appeal is thus used as a ruse for the multitude to hide the naked search for power.

This issue is certainly raised in an acute form in any attempt at interpreting totalitarian mentality, whether in the Nazi or Communist form. Was the Nazi movement the expression of a sheer lust for power, or was it rooted in a certain moral and historical outlook, in resentment felt by the Germans against the injustice to which they were supposed to have been subjected by the Allied and Associated Powers, in the belief in the ultimate superiority of German culture, a superiority so great that to secure its triumph the sacrifice of ordinary moral standards was justified? Or consider

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Communist case. Is the present conflict between the U.S.S.R. and the Western world rooted in ideological differences or is it merely a game of power politics? Is Russian diplomacy merely carrying on, in the new world setting, the old Czarist drive for expansion or is it in essence a desire to spread Communism? Is it, so to say, Russian expansionism or Communist universalism?

Put in this form the question hardly permits of an answer. It raises problems of historical causality which in the present state of sociological knowledge we have no adequate means of resolving. We do not know how to compare the strength of ideas with that of other social forces. Nor can we ascertain with any confidence what were the motives which impelled the leaders and the people they led in these terrifying mass movements. Some of the leaders, no doubt, were power maniacs, utterly devoid of moral sensibility; others were moral fanatics; others again are not perhaps themselves moral fanatics, but rather disillusioned, uncertain, incapable of resolute action and thus inclined to admire certainty in others and to be carried away by a sort of borrowed fanaticism, the fanaticism of the loyal follower. Of the masses who are led a similar analysis is no doubt possible. It remains true all the same that in all cases the moral appeal is thought necessary, if enthusiasm is to be inspired and a readiness for sacrifice and devotion to the cause to be inculcated and sustained. The moral factor is thus, to put it mildly, not negligible.

The case of the communists presents some new features. Here again there is no doubt of the importance attached to the moral appeal. Their writings abound in uncontrolled and savage moral condemnation; they are inspired by a relentless hatred of tyranny and injustice. Yet in theory 'scientific' socialism regards all morals as reflecting the class struggle and presumably subject to an ineluctable law of social development. 'Whoever', says Trotsky, 'does not care to return to Moses, Christ or Mohammed; whoever is not satisfied with an eclectic hotch-potch (*i.e.*, the ethical theories of the philosophers), must acknowledge that morality is a product of social development; that there is nothing immutable about it; that it serves social interests; that these interests are contradictory; that morality more than any other form of ideology has a class character'.[1] The morality of the bourgeois age is designed to inculcate submission to the powers that be; the morality of the proletariat is of the sort which is necessary for the revolution and while the struggle goes on there can be no supra class morality, whatever may be the case when classes have disappeared. In the interim 'morality serves politics'.

It is hard to say how far such doctrines can be taken seriously. Those who do not believe in ineluctable laws of social development will be equally sceptical of any law supposed to determine the changes which morals have undergone. It would be idle to pursue this further. From the practical point of view, that is to say, when

[1] *Their Morals and Ours*, p. 13.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a question arises as to what is to be done, the so-called law of development turns out to be even less helpful than the despised Categorical Imperative. The point is well illustrated by the Trotsky-Stalin controversy. With some show of consistency Trotsky does not condemn the Stalin policy on moral grounds. 'Stalinist frame-ups are not, he says, 'a fruit of Bolshevik "amoralism"; no, like all important events in history they are a product of the concrete social struggle, and the most perfidious and severest of all at that: the struggle of the new aristocracy against the masses that raised it to power' (p. 23). Stalinism is explained as a deviation from the true path of proletarian revolution. It is 'an immense bureaucratic reaction against the proletarian dictatorship in a backward and isolated country', a new Bonapartism with its own 'Thermidor'. It is the height of intellectual and moral obtuseness, we are told, to identify the reactionary police morality of Stalinism with the revolutionary morality of the Bolsheviks (p. 23). Trotsky, however, does not explain how this reactionary bureaucracy emerged out of the dictatorship of the proletariat established by the Communist party or how its emergence can be reconciled with the ineluctable law of social development. To describe it as reactionary can only mean that it is not in harmony with this law, or as Trotsky puts it, it is already condemned by history. This presumably would mean that it is destined to fail. But this Trotsky does not know and makes no attempt to show. In the long run he condemns Stalinism because in his view it is morally wrong, because 'it has regenerated the fetishism of power in forms that absolute monarchy dared not dream of' (p. 23). In other words Trotsky does not really decide on policy by asking who is going to win but rather by asking who ought to win. It follows that differences in moral outlook are not mere reflexes of class conflict but are also regarded as capable of providing guidance for the direction which class conflict ought to follow. Trotsky, like others who profess to despise morals, is a moralist *malgré lui*.

In short the moral factor must be reckoned with in any attempt at interpreting social change, though it may be impossible in the present stage of sociology to estimate its precise importance. It can be safely said that so far no one has succeeded in formulating any ineluctable laws of social development and that there is no reason to doubt the efficacy of the human will in bringing about social changes. This has an important bearing on the present conflict between the West and the U.S.S.R. What the Russians intend to do and by what considerations they are likely to be guided are thus questions of the greatest importance. The decision is not foreordained. There are no certain dynamic laws governing the expansion of empires. There is nothing which drives them inevitably to extend their zone of influence. They are guided by beliefs and the hopes and fears which these inspire. In the case of the U.S.S.R. the most plausible hypothesis is that, apart from the possible influence of some power maniacs, its counsellors are influenced by the belief that a conflict between them and the capitalist world

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is, in accordance with Marxist doctrine, inevitable and that in the interest of self-defence it must have control over the neighbouring countries. This easily passes into the new policy of 'building socialism in one group of countries' replacing the earlier policy of 'building socialism in one country'. It is easy to see how in this way communist faith and the policy of expansion fuse so that it becomes difficult to distinguish between them. How far the fear of a Western attack is inspired by Communist doctrine of inevitable conflict and how far it is fed by the behaviour, actual or imputed, of the Western peoples is a question as difficult to answer as the question whether the expansionist tendency once in full swing will be satisfied with anything less than world domination. It is clear, however, that 'ideological' differences do count and to understand their precise nature is therefore a task which is not to be neglected.

II.

Here we are concerned with ideologies in so far as they affect differences in moral outlook. It is commonly held that the essential point about totalitarian morality is the denial of a universal moral law binding on all mankind and its replacement by a relativist view of morals, racial relativism in the case of National Socialism and class relativism in the case of the Communists.

Let us consider the Nazi position first. The difficulty here is that we can easily do the Nazis too much honour by ascribing to them a definite theory maintained with some consistency. There is no doubt that in their propaganda appeal was made to justice, reason, fairness. There is no doubt also that in the same breath all the commonly accepted standards of justice and reasonableness were treated with contempt and derision. If their views can be described as relativistic they have little in common with the philosophic forms of relativism; they are so extreme as to amount to moral nihilism. The case is frankly stated by Mussolini in a passage which I quote at some length:

> 'In Germany relativism is an extraordinary daring and destructive theoretical construction (perhaps Germany's philosophical revenge which may announce the military revenge). In Italy relativism is simply a fact. Fascism is a super-relativistic movement because it has never attempted to clothe its complicated and powerful mental attitude with a definite programme but has succeeded by following its ever changing individual intuition. Everything I have said and done in these last years is relativism by intuition. If relativism signifies the end of faith in science, the decay of that myth "science" conceived as the discovery of absolute truth, I can boast of having applied relativism to the analysis of socialism. If relativism signifies contempt for fixed categories and men who claim to be the bearers of an external objective truth . . . then there is nothing more relativistic than Fascist attitudes and activity . . . We Fascists have always

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> expressed our complete indifference towards all theories . . . We Fascists have had the courage to discard all traditional political theories, and we are aristocrats and democrats, revolutionaries and reactionaries, proletarians and anti-proletarians, pacifists and anti-pacifists. It is sufficient to have a single fixed point: the nation. The rest is obvious. From the fact that all ideologies are mere fictions, the modern relativist deduces that everybody is free to create for himself his own ideology and to attempt to carry it out with all possible energy'.
>
> (*Diuturna*, Milano, 1924, pp. 374-7: *Relativismo e Fascismo*, quoted by Franz Neumann, *Begemoth*, p. 462).

This can only be called a theory if the rejection of all theory is entitled to be called a theory.

The German National Socialist views are not very different apart from the intrusion of the racial element and the pretentious and turgid language in which they are expressed. They are based on what appears to be a form of vitalistic intuitionism. According to this, impulse and will are more vital than thought. The fundamental categories of thought and, in particular, the sense of values, spring from the race. Moral principles are tied to the race and are only binding within it. There is no such thing as humanity but only different racial communities. The community is the ultimate end and must never be treated as a means. Moral principles are binding, but validity means here, as elsewhere, the acceptance by the mass of the discoveries made by the creative minds of the race. Ultimately, therefore, there is no criterion other than the intuitions the leaders (or leader) have of what is good for the racial community. It is easy to see to what uses such a theory, if theory it can be called, can be put. Not only is the *Volk* put above all humanity but only the intuition of the leader decides where the 'true' interests of the *Volk* lie. There is little to choose between this sort of thing and the frankly nihilistic intuitionism of Mussolini.[2]

Marxist morality is certainly not relativist in the sense of relying on individual emotion or intuition. On the contrary, it claims to be scientific, that is to say, to rely on an objective determination of social needs. It is presumed that were it possible to eliminate class bias and distortion, in other words, were it possible to bring a classless society into being, a universal morality binding on all would for the first time become ascertainable. In existing societies, on the other hand, morality is always class-bound. This is seen in the title of one of Trotsky's books from which I have quoted—*Their Morals and Ours*. 'Morality', he says, 'is a function of the class struggle; democratic morality corresponds to the epoch of liberal and progressive capitalism; the sharpening of the class struggle destroyed this morality; in its place came the morality of Fascism on one side, on the other the morality of the proletarian

[2] C. E. Krieck, *Völkisch-Politische Anthropologie*, 3 Bde. Leipzig, 1937.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

revolution' (p. 16). There may be some highly general principles, but the working code of morals, whatever the philosophers may say, is not in fact based on a consideration of general human needs. People are in fact guided by the needs of their class. This applies also to the workers in the transitional period. Especially during a civil war general moral ties are broken and the demands of the class over-ride all other claims. '*Our* morality', says Lenin, 'is wholly subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat. We deduce our morality from the facts and needs of the class struggle of the proletariat'. The ethics of the revolution is the ethics of war: 'it explodes into mid-air all moral ties between the hostile classes' (Trotsky, p. 14). 'Whoever accepts the end must accept the means; civil war with its wake of horror and crimes'. Of course violence and lies are bad, but this merely means that we must condemn the class society which generates them. 'A society without social contradictions will naturally be a society without lies and violence. However, there is no way of building a bridge to that society save by revolutionary, that is violent, means. The revolution itself is a product of class society and of necessity bears its traits. From the point of view of "eternal truth" revolution is of course anti-moral. But this merely means that idealist morality is counter-revolutionary, that is, in the service of the exploiters' (p. 25). Revolutionary morality thus inculcates, in Spencer's phrase, amity within and enmity without. Nothing is to be done which sets one part of the working classes against another, or which is likely to lower their morale. Against the rest of the world everything is justified which is required by revolutionary tactics and strategy. When the class struggle is over a universal morality will become possible. Thus Engels: 'A really human morality which transcends class antagonism and their legacies in thought becomes possible only at a stage of society which has not only overcome class antagonisms, but has even forgotten them in practical life'.[3]

The theory can be summed up in the following way:

1. The interests of the social classes are irreconcilably opposed. This is not an ethical proposition but is intended as a statement of fact.

2. The conflict thus generated produces a moral code appropriate to each stage. Thus, *e.g.*, in the period of expanding capitalism with the resulting prosperity there was a certain softening of the relations between the classes, and this was expressed in the norms of democracy with its emphasis on freedom, justice and humanity. In the period of what is called 'decaying' capitalism these break down and reveal their helplessness. They are replaced, as Trotsky says, by the ethics of Fascism and Revolutionary Socialism. The ethics of the latter is naturally one necessitated by revolutionary tactics. This again is a statement of what purports to be historical fact.

---

[3] *Anti-Duhring*, p. 109.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3. The relative ethics of the different periods can be examined not only from the point of view of their appropriateness to the conditions prevailing in each period, but also in the light of an ultimate ideal or end; for this ideal absolute validity is claimed. When we ask what this end is the answer is vague and in fact not very different from the answer given by bourgeois ethics. Marx tells us it is a mode of life in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all. Trotsky says: 'A means can be justified only by its end. But the end in its turn needs to be justified. From the Marxist point of view, which expresses the historical interests of the proletariat, the end is justified if it leads to increasing the power of man over nature and to the abolition of the power of man over man'. It is an open question whether this is an improvement on the Kantian formula: Always treat humanity in your own person and in others as an end and never as a means merely.

4. This ideal can only be reached by revolutionary methods, that is, by violence. The ethics appropriate in this phase is that which is dictated by revolutionary strategy and tactics. These cannot be judged by bourgeois moral codes. Since the means have to be justified by the end, it has to be assumed that violent revolution both *can* attain the end and that it is the *only method* by which it can be attained.

It will be seen that all these propositions, with the exception of the third, are statements of fact and not of ethics proper. It is open to question whether the interests of the social classes are irreconcilably in conflict in democratic societies; it is open to question whether historically the working code of morals is completely or even mainly class bound; it is open to question whether the ultimate end, that is, the full and free development of personality, the abolition of the power of man over man, *can* be attained by violence and by violence alone. It is in reference to this last question that the most serious divergence exists between liberal and communist thought. Trotsky himself stresses what he calls the dialectical interdependence of means and ends. It has to be shown that the means chosen are '*really* likely to lead to the liberation of mankind'. 'Precisely from this', he says, 'it follows that not all means are permissible. When we say that the end justifies the means then for us the conclusion follows that the great revolutionary end spurns those base means and ways which set one part of the working class against other parts, or attempt to make the masses happy without their participation; or lower the faith of the masses in themselves and their organization, replacing it by worship of the leaders' (p. 35). Are not these results, we must ask, certain to follow any revolution in which a minority seeks to impose its will on the rest of society by violent means?

If this analysis is on the right lines the ideological difference between the communists and their opponents does not concern ultimate moral ends. The communists cannot be described as believers in a moral relativity without qualification. On the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contrary, they pride themselves on their objective, *i.e.*, scientifically determinable, view of ethics. Anticipating the classless society they apply the ethics which would then prevail as a standard by which the relative ethics of the class-ridden societies can be judged and which, as they say, embodies the real interests of the proletariat. Nor do they in theory reject the value of individual personality; they claim, as socialists always have done, to aim at the liberation of mankind. Nor is their view of the relation between means and ends theoretically different from that which might well be held by moral philosophers who are not communists. For they realize that means and ends are interdependent, in other words, that the means adopted must be such as not to distort and corrupt the end aimed at. There is a moral difference, but this does not mean that the communists reject the fundamental principles of Western civilization. On the contrary what they suffer from is a moral fanaticism arising out of a loss of faith in the dilatory habits which they associate with the liberal spirit and out of despair at the terrible inertia of the masses. Thereafter the formidable apparatus of communist sociology comes into play. The bourgeoisie is represented as waging war with the working classes. The slogans of democracy are the weapons of the bourgeoisie. It has to be met by all the weapons of war available. For a time it may be necessary to play the democratic game, but in the end the masses cannot be brought to socialism through democratic methods. 'The path of socialist ideas', says Trotsky, 'which is visible through all deviations and even betrayals, foreshadows no other outcome but this: to throw democracy aside and replace it by the mechanism of the proletariat, at the moment when the latter is strong enough to carry out such a task'.[4] The regime which is set up aims at the 'real interests of the labouring masses'. But these cannot be ascertained by the crude method of discovering their opinion. The business of the regime does not consist 'in statically reflecting a majority, but in dynamically creating it'.[5] How this has worked out in the case of the Russian Revolution we know. It has resulted in the seizure of power by a party which is only a small fraction of the proletariat. Operating à la Blanqui, it has established a pitiless dictatorship and rules fanatically in accordance with its own ideology and will to power. Others can play a similar game. The Nazis learnt its techniques: disruption of ordinary democratic processes, seizure of power by terrorist methods, obsessional propaganda directed at telling 'the masses' what they ought to want, reliance on a series of crises designed to keep alive the mentality of war, the maintenance of a form of government appropriate to war. The Nazi regime has been destroyed, but the methods now pursued by the Soviet, whether inspired by a missionary spirit or by the needs of self-defence, everywhere put the democracies to the severest possible tests. In these circumstances the moral issues are obscured. The

[4] *Defence of Terrorism*, p. 40.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ultimate ends about which there may be little or no disagreement are forgotten. The means become all important and are pursued fanatically without any consideration of their relevance to the ends. What inspires this fanaticism is not a moral theory about ultimate ends but a sociological theory of the class struggle and the belief that a war between the communist states and the rest of the world is inevitable. This soon passes into the belief that the world is already at war. Ordinary moral standards then become inapplicable. 'The welfare of the Revolution; that is the supreme law'. The supra-class morality which is to provide the ultimate moral standard has no application. The operative moral code is that of war. Does this involve a conflict of ideologies between the communists and their opponents? Clearly the answer is 'yes'. Does the conflict involve a difference of moral outlook? The answer again must be 'yes' though the difference turns ultimately on a difference in the interpretation of the facts.

III.

Curiously enough justification for democracy has been sought by some writers in theories of moral relativity. Thus Kelsen has argued that the opposition between autocracy and democracy turns ultimately on our view of the nature of knowledge and especially of our theory of morality. Those who believe in the possibility of absolute knowledge will tend to autocratic forms of social organization; those who favour the positivistic view, or perhaps more correctly, those who accept a form of critical relativism, will tend towards democracy. In other words, since our views regarding the ends of social endeavour are only relative, we can only justify the use of coercion by the State when that coercion is agreed upon by the majority.[6] A similar view was held by Radbruch[7] who also argues that since all our value judgments are relative only the will of the majority should be decisive.

Whether this is logically consistent may be doubted, since it appears to raise at least one principle above the sphere of relative validity, namely, that where there is doubt, coercion ought not to be used. Be this as it may, the fact that such theories have been held throws serious doubt upon the opposite view which has recently attracted some attention that there is a special association between logical positivism or other forms of ethical relativity and fascism. The fact is that historically no regular association in either direction can be established. Auguste Comte certainly held a relativist theory of knowledge, but can hardly be called a liberal democrat. The Utilitarians, empiricists in their theory of knowledge, were not ethical relativists, but they were ardent defenders of the main principles of democracy. The originators of logical positivism in Vienna were certainly far from supporting fascism. It would appear

[6] *Cf. Allgemeine Staatslehre*, p. 370.
[7] *Rechtsphilosophie* (3rd ed. 1932), Vorwort, p. viii.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that with such very general designations as positivism, relativism, democracy, no fruitful analysis can be conducted. In applying ethical theories to the problems of political organization the important thing is not so much the formulation of ultimate ends as the discovery of mediating principles by the aid of which a link can be established between ultimate ends and the detail of life. The serious difficulties of morals are due in the main to ignorance of human nature and of the consequences of human inter-actions. It is easy for lofty principles to remain on a safe level of abstraction, or to be used, as they often have been, in justification of the *status quo*, or, as in the case of the revolutionaries, to justify whatever is thought to be tactically necessary. The growth of positive knowledge of human needs and potentiality is therefore an essential pre-requisite of advance in ethical thought. The believer in a rational ethic need have no fear of the positive spirit. The task of a rational ethic is to clarify our ideals and this involves the careful disentangling of the elements of fact from the elements of valuation proper which are generally intermixed in our moral judgments. The deeper our knowledge of the facts, the greater the chance of increased insight into the nature of values. Whatever positivism has to contribute in this direction is all to the good. What to my mind is inacceptable in the positivist view of morals is the assumption that we know what we want, that ends are just given and that the only question for investigation relates to the means needed in order to satisfy them. For this assumption there is no warrant in observation or in analytic introspection and it is not in harmony with what I take to be the main principle of positivism itself, namely, that knowledge must be based on observation.

Democracy cannot be based on moral indifference or moral scepticism. The ideas which gave it impetus are, first, the idea of freedom with its correlative notion of individual responsibility, and, secondly, the idea of equality which is the core of justice. It is sometimes said that liberalism is not committed to any particular conception of the content of the good,[8] that, on the contrary, it is based on the contention that everyone knows best what his own good is and that the important thing is that the individual should be free to pursue whatever ends he chooses, provided he does not interfere with the like freedom of other persons to pursue their own ends in their own way. This Spencerian formula still has some vitality despite the devastating criticism to which it has been subjected. It owes this vitality to the fact that it emphasizes the point that coercion is *pro tanto* evil. But it is surely illusory to think that the problem of the relation beween coercion and freedom can be resolved without considering the nature of the ends aimed at, their bearing on the means which have to be adopted and their effect upon the agents and others concerned. As years of controversy have shown, the problem is mainly one of the limits of

[8]F. Knight: *Freedom and Reform*, p. 52.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coercion, that is, of distinguishing between the kind of control that is necessary in order to secure the conditions under which ends having intrinsic value can be attained and the kind of control that is destructive of these values. It is a question of getting rid of coercion, direct and indirect, fatal to the realization of values, and of employing that kind of coercion which is indispensable for the attainment of those values. The problems involved concern both social philosophy and social science. It seems to me that on the purely ethical side the antinomies that worried the liberal thinkers of the nineteenth century have lost their sting. That liberty rests on constraint, that there is no real opposition between individual and social good may now be taken as sufficiently well established. Liberal thought has, I think, enriched the content of the idea of freedom by showing its relation to the intrinsic values of individual personality and by a deepened analysis of the relations between the individual and society. In all this there was nothing which would bring it into opposition with the main tenets of socialism, the inspiration of which was undoubtedly also the idea of freedom. But, as Hobhouse saw clearly,[9] there are forms of socialism with which liberalism can have nothing to do, and, as he also saw, if there is such a thing as liberal socialism, it must fulfil two conditions. It must reflect the desires not of a handful of superior beings but of the masses of men, and it must make not for the suppression but for the free development of personality. Between this kind of socialism and present-day communism there is a deep cleavage. And it is a moral cleavage. For what counts in the communist ethics is not the ideal morality of the classless society in which 'the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all' but the relative morality of the class struggle which is the morality of enmity and war and in which the ordinary standards of morals are not only violated in practice but are openly derided in theory. This cleavage, in so far as it has a theoretical basis, is no doubt mainly due not to a divergence of view regarding ultimate values, but to a difference in the way in which the facts are interpreted. But in this, as in many other contexts, judgments of value and judgments of fact are confused, with the result that the ideals are corrupted and the facts distorted. Whether the struggle now raging is ultimately to be traced to moral causes is a problem which may well baffle enquiry but that the contest is embittered by a profound opposition of moral outlook is beyond doubt.

The control of group violence is the most urgent problem of our day. In particular, the association of war with revolution has now a significance far more terrifying than at any other time in history. The brutality of modern warfare with its mass deportations and the massacre of millions of the civilian population has deadened the power of moral appeal and has obliterated standards which formerly seemed self-evident. To the sufferers moral appeal comes as bitter mockery, to the ardent revolutionary as blatant hypocrisy.

[9] *Liberalism*, Chap. VIII.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is no consolation to be reminded that the brutalities of the war were in a measure the product of the revolutionary tactics of the totalitarian regimes, whether communist or Nazi. The ruthlessness of the revolutionaries prepared the way for the ruthlessness of the wars and the amoralism of war is reflected in the amoralism of revolution. The blurring of the distinction between war and revolution has been further intensified by the experience of the resistance movements, whose tactics can be as readily used against the enemy within as against the aggressor without. The communist view that the ethics of the revolution is the ethics of enmity, therefore, presents a challenge which if not countered must end in the destruction of all forms of free government and liberal civilization.

Contrary to what one might be led to expect from communist writings, 'bourgeois' moral philosophers of varying political affliation, have not denied that in certain circumstances there is moral justification for rebellion.[10] They have not indeed found it possible to lay down any general principles for it, or to put it more frankly, they have not discovered any infallible method for avoiding civil war. They have, however, pointed to certain general considerations which those who resort to force must bear in mind. Firstly they must be satisfied that they have a reasonable chance of success; secondly, they must have exhausted all peaceful means of attaining their ends and, thirdly, they must be convinced that the evils they want to remove are worse than the risk of disorder and anarchy. These considerations emphasized by philosophers writing in an age of security and stability are not likely to restrain struggling minorities driven to desperate measures by prolonged frustration and disillusion. Nor will nice calculations of the probability of success deter those who, moved by the feeling that injustice is worse than death, set out 'to defy Power which seems omnipotent'. In reference to past revolutions who can say in retrospect whether any of them were worth the price and whether the price was necessary? In prospect the difficulty of weighing up the evils of resistance against the evils of the existing order are even greater, especially if the scale on which the comparison has now to be made is borne in mind. When Stalin was asked by a newspaper correspondent about the millions of peasants who died during the drive for collectivism he answered by drawing a comparison with the losses of the world war. 'Over seven-and-a-half million deaths for no purpose at all. Then you must acknowledge that our losses are small, because your war ended in chaos, while we are engaged in a work which will benefit the whole of humanity'.[11]

These difficulties of comparison are not to be dismissed lightly. Yet they do not differ in kind, though they differ greatly in degree of complexity from the difficulties we have to meet in other

[10] *Cf.* Ritchie, *Natural Rights*, Chap. XI; T. H. Green, *Philosophical Works*, II, pp. 455 seq.; Sidgwick, *Elements of Politics*, p. 619 seq.
[11] Quoted in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*, by H. J. Morgenthau, p. 182.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

important moral decisions. The principles may be sound enough, but in applying them to complex issues we are hindered by our ignorance of the facts and the probable consequences of the policies open to us. This applies to revolution as it applies to war. Theoretically we must admit, I take it, that from a moral point of view, there may be just rebellions as there may be just wars. In most democratic states, of course, there is a much greater chance of settling internal conflicts by peaceful methods than there is in the case of conflicts between states. Yet under modern conditions war and revolution have become so entangled that a failure to restrain the one must result in a failure to restrain the other. If the ethics of enmity are allowed to guide the relations between states they will also dominate the relations between groups within states. In both cases morality to be effective must cease to be group morality and reach out towards a morality binding on all persons in a world community.

MORRIS GINSBERG.

CORRESPONDENCE

TO THE EDITORS OF *Scrutiny*.

Clearly education ought not to become a Bantock-Ford monopoly in *Scrutiny*; it is time the caste were changed. For this reason I decided in advance not to reply to Mr. Bantock's rejoinder. But for three reasons I now feel compelled to write after all, though as briefly as possible.

First, concerning the anecdote about a Dartington pupil, I want to offer my sincere apologies to Mr. O'Malley for introducing him quite gratuitously into the discussion, and for telling the story inaccurately into the bargain. Moreover, I am particularly sorry that my manner of telling the story gave Mr. Bantock the opening which he took—though I think it was very wrong of him, for all his apology, to take it at Mr. O'Malley's expense. For if my 'expression [was] so slipshod' that Mr. Bantock encountered 'some difficulty in discovering what precisely happened', then surely he had no right to deduce, out of my tangled verbiage, that Mr. O'Malley's educational practice is 'inadequate'. At any rate, Mr. O'Malley has since written:

> 'Two anecdotes seem to have been telescoped. One had the moral that distinguished parents have great difficulty in accepting the fact that genius is not automatically transmitted. The other was more relevant. It concerned a child on whom the right literary views had been most successfully "imposed". His self-righteous condemnation of the trivial reading-matter of some of his friends betrayed a secret curiosity, even fascination. I persuaded him to sample what he condemned with such pleasure. For a while

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he took up this new form of reading even more avidly than is usual, but he soon passed from the boys' weeklies back to more serious reading—again, with my encouragement. He thence-forward ignored the more trivial reading matter, instead of wasting his energies keeping it at arm's length.

'It is only rarely that one would encourage the reading of detective novels and the like, or the playing of boogie-woogie; but to attempt to "impose" standards that exclude them seems to me both dishonest and inefficient. Learning and culture are not easily come by, though it is easy enough to impart convincing gestures'.

A great deal of Mr. Bantock's rejoinder is taken up, profitably I feel, with clarifying his ideas on 'the authority of the subject' and with putting Method in its place. Though we differ in certain respects, I am quite content to leave it there. What I am less ready to leave alone is the fashion in which Mr. Bantock uses my description of the school at Mishmar Haemek to prove that I am not 'primarily concerned with learning and culture', that my 'main sympathies lie elsewhere'. Whereas he stands for culture and 'certain autonomies of the individual', I put my faith, apparently, in 'the purely social' (and what this means is hinted at in asides about the 'concentration camp', 'Soviet apologist', 'neo-Marxist', and an intriguing reference to 'the knowledge one has of Mr. Ford's position').

Now Mr. Bantock 'proves' all this, 'the suspicion becomes a certainty', with his claim that I held up Mishmar Haemek as the kind of education I would recommend. It therefore seems necessary to assert that, in the sense implied, I did not hold up Mishmar Haemek as an ideal. I described it at some length as 'a striking illustration' of my denial that so-called free methods *necessarily* betoken a lack of purpose, as Mr. Bantock argued in his original article. If my description was sympathetic in tone, that was because I wanted to indicate that these free methods seemed 'to foster certain very excellent human qualities', however rigid and narrow might be the ultimate purposes they were designed to subserve. Certainly I did nothing to conceal this rigidity and narrowness of purpose, and I made a point of observing that the social values animating the work as Mishmar Haemek were 'limited in some ways'. Had it been relevant to my purpose (and had I felt it necessary to point out something so obvious to *Scrutiny* readers), I would have developed this sense of limitation, for instance that I deplored the atmosphere of intolerance and philistinism. In short, had Mr. Bantock really wanted to quote the kind of education I believe in, he might more reasonably have referred to the two instances of cultural education in which I was personally involved and which I also described at length; they do not seem to me to support his picture of me as a person not 'primarily concerned with learning and culture'.

Indeed, when he comes to the teaching of cultural subjects, I am convinced that it is Mr. Bantock's approach, and not mine,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which does the least service to the arts. Thus he feels that 'the best *last* word [in response to a work of art] might well involve an admission to a lack of comprehension'; and that 'the pupil's acceptance or rejection [of the teacher's demonstration of value] makes no scrap of difference, *except from the purely personal point of view of the pupil, which is something irrelevant to the convincingness of the demonstration*' (my italics). Now Mr. Bantock's suggestion that a teacher's demonstration can really be convincing without having been moulded to the pupil's or at least the class's point of view, reveals, to my mind, a very limited and authoritarian idea of what is involved in helping someone (child or adult) to find his bearings in an art. It is true, of course, that if one's pupil were to consider Wilhelmina Stitch a superior poet to T. S. Eliot, that would not in itself lessen Mr. Eliot's stature, but only the pupil's. What I was saying, with no great claim to originality, was that it would be a poor teacher who was content only to *prove* Mr. Eliot's superiority and leave his pupil (no doubt 'admitting to a lack of comprehension') to carry this proof around with him parrot-fashion. Surely the teacher should help him *feel* this difference of value in the very texture of the two writings; so that his task would not be done, nor his proof successful, until the pupil could agree with him from personal experience rather than out of deference to authority.

In short, one's concern in teaching the arts is not to hand out, let alone impose, a prefabricated bundle of judgments, but to introduce a scheme of values in such a way as to develop in the pupil a capacity for first-hand discrimination and enjoyment. For while value is, I believe, inherent in the work of art, its apprehension depends on the sensibility of the individual reader or listener or looker. It seems to me odd that for this belief I am written off by Mr. Bantock as being 'at one with the age', and odder still that I should have to urge such a point on someone who has been 'a reader of *Scrutiny* since its inception' and who so much champions 'the autonomies of the individual'.

Yours faithfully,

BORIS FORD.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE CASE OF JOHN WEBSTER

DISINTEGRATION characterizes the view of life which inspired Webster's best-known plays. It is perfectly true, as Dr. Tillyard remarks,[1] that Webster, like the rest of his age, inherited 'the Elizabethan world-picture'; but in his work we see that world-picture falling in ruins. When Dr. Tillyard goes on to say that Webster's characters belong 'to a world of violent crime and violent change, of sin, blood and repentance, yet to a world loyal to a theological scheme', and adds: 'indeed all the violence of Elizabethan drama has nothing to do with a dissolution of moral standards: on the contrary, it can afford to indulge itself just because those standards were so powerful', he is overlooking the highly significant differences between Elizabethan drama and Jacobean drama, and uttering a dangerous half-truth. No doubt there is a definite 'theological scheme' behind Webster, in the sense that it was familiar to his audience and himself, and could therefore be drawn on for imagery; but *The White Divel* and *The Dutchesse of Malfy* are our best evidence that the Elizabethan theological scheme could no longer hold together.

Henry James pointed out that the ultimate source of a novel's value is the quality of the mind which produced it;[2] and the same is true of drama. Great tragedy can be written only by a man who has achieved—at least for the period of composition—a profound *and balanced* insight into life. Webster—his plays are our evidence—did not achieve such an insight. The imagery, verse-texture, themes and 'philosophy' of his plays all point to a fundamental flaw, which is ultimately a moral flaw.

If one reads through *The White Divel* and *The Dutchesse of Malfy*, noting down the *sententiæ* and moralizing asides of the various characters, one finds oneself in possession of a definite attempt at a 'philosophy', a moral to the tale:

> "*Integrity of life, is fames best friend,*
> *Which noblely (beyond Death) shall crowne the end.*[3]

This philosophy is Stoical and Senecan, with a Roman emphasis on the responsibilities of Princes:

---

[1]*The Elizabethan World Picture*, pp. 17-18.

[2]*The Art of Fiction.*

[3]My references are to *The Complete Works of John Webster*, edited by F. L. Lucas (Chatto and Windus, 1927). *The Dutchesse of Malfy*, V, 5, 146. (Webster's italics).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> The lives of Princes should like dyals move,
> Whose regular example is so strong,
> They make the times by them go right or wrong.[4]

But this background of moral doctrine has nothing to do with the action of the plays: so far from growing out of the action, it bears all the marks of having been superimposed by the poet in a cooler, less creative mood, than that in which the Duchess and Flamineo had their birth.[5] There is no correspondence between the axioms and the life represented in the drama. This dissociation is the fundamental flaw in Webster.

What was wrong, apparently, was that there was available no philosophy of life which kindled Webster's imagination as certain aspects of Hell, or Chaos, kindled it. No moral order represented itself to his imagination as real. Consequently his plays contain brilliant passages of poetry—they appear whenever he touches on the small area which acted as his inspiration—but lack imaginative coherence. They have indeed a unity, the unity for which the 'mist' is a symbol; but one mood, isolated and out of focus, cannot be the basis of a profound tragic vision. Webster himself seems to have understood this better than some of his more enthusiastic critics; but his attempt to shore up chaos with a sententious philosophy is a flagrant artistic insincerity. Webster fails to realize his Senecan philosophy as he realizes his glimpses of Hell.

We might say that Webster suffered from the poverty—the philosophical poverty—of the tradition in which he worked; but the fact that he chose to write in the Revenge tradition at all is itself evidence of a lack of harmony in his own mind. For other traditions were available, notably the tradition of the Morality, to which Shakespeare's great tragedies owe more than has even yet been understood.[6] Webster's choice of the Revenge tradition, his failure to give life to his Senecan moralizings, and (we may add) the fact that his work contains no convincing statement of the *positive* aspect of the doctrine of Degree, are all related: Degree and Order—as we come to see—were not real enough to Webster to stir his imagination. A lower concept of the Universe, and of Man's place in it, was all that he could compass.

This explains the fascination which the 'Machiavellian' had for Webster. To the conservative Elizabethan the Machiavellian doctrine seemed merely the denial of that Order and Degree which

---

[4] *The White Divel*, I, 2, 279–281.

[5] The fact that Webster used common-place books supports this diagnosis.

[6] *Hamlet* owes more to the Revenge tradition, and less to the tradition of the Morality, than any other of Shakespeare's great tragedies; and while it contains passages of brilliant poetry, *Hamlet* lacks the unity and the tremendous moral force of *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. It is with the Shakespeare of *Hamlet* that Webster has something in common.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

held the Universe together: Machiavellianism was anarchism. It is not surprising that a mind as unbalanced as Webster's should have allowed the Machiavellian ideal to usurp the place in his thought which a more conservative poet would have reserved for Degree. As a consequence there are a remarkable number of 'politicians' in his two plays.

Flamineo in *The White Divel* is a good example. He acts as pander to his sister Vittoria, contrives her husband's death, and treats his mother with a cold, sub-human ferocity:

> I pray will you go to bed then,
> Least you be blasted?[7]

He treacherously murders his brother in his mother's presence, and proclaims that nothing but a limitation of his natural ability prevents him from double-crossing his master, Brachiano: 'I had as good a will to cosen him, as e're an Officer of them all; but I had not cunning enough to doe it'.[8] He tries to corrupt even Giovanni with cynical advice. It is only when he is listening to the 'superstitious howling'[9] of his mother over the brother whom he has killed that Flamineo's Machiavellianism proves imperfect:

> I have a strange thing in mee, to th' which
> I cannot give a name, without it bee
> Compassion.[10]

Flamineo's philosophy is simply that

> *Knaves do grow great by being great mens apes.*[11]

He explains his own villainy by saying:

> . . . I made *a kind of path*
> To her [Vittoria's] & mine owne preferment.[12]

Flamineo's attitude to women proves him a 'Courtier' of a very different cast from Castiglione's ideal:

> I visited the Court, whence I return'd
> More courteous, more letcherous by farre.[13]

His attitude to women is that of 'the cynic'. He regards a woman's modesty as 'but the superficies of lust',[14] and makes love to Zanche 'just as a man holds a wolfe by the eares'[15]—to prevent her from

---

[7] *W.D.*, I, 2, 264.
[8] *W.D.*, V, 3, 56-8.
[9] *W.D.*, V, 4, 59.
[10] *W.D.*, V, 4, 109.
[11] *W.D.*, IV, 2, 246 (Webster's italics).
[12] *W.D.*, III, 1, 36-7 (my italics).
[13] *W.D.*, I, 2, 319.
[14] *W.D.*, I, 2, 18.
[15] *W.D.*, V, 1, 150.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turning on him. He looks on women—and on all humanity—as mere animals: 'women are like curst dogges'; human love-making he regards as the coupling of mare and stallion.[16] There is something peculiarly fiendish about his ironical comment, as he eavesdrops at the love-making of Vittoria and Brachiano:

> Brac: [enamoured] Nay lower, you shall weare my Jewell lower.
> Flam: [aside] *That's better, she must weare his Jewell lower.*[17]

There is an infinite weariness in Flamineo's voice when he says:

> O, no othes for gods sake![18]

The strident courage which Flamineo shows in dying—

> Strike thunder, and strike lowde to my farewell[19]

—is a quality which he shares with all Webster's Machiavellians; and this, the one admirable quality in so many of his characters, manifests Webster's peculiarly limited and deformed notion of ethics. We find in Webster only the virtue of Hell: the courage of despair. The stridency of this pagan courage is very evident when Brachiano cries:

> . . . *Monticelso,*
> *Nemo me Impune laces*[*s*]*it,*[20]

or when Francisco proclaims:

> *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.*[21]

Denied insight into any virtue other than Stoical courage, Webster tries to erect unflinchingly perseverance in evil into the sum of moral goodness. In the process he is disingenuous. As Lamb remarked, 'This White Devil of Italy sets off a bad cause so speciously, and pleads *with such an innocence-resembling boldness,* that we . . . are ready to expect, when she has done her pleadings, that . . . all the court will rise and make proffer to defend her in spite of the utmost conviction of her guilt'.[22] Vittoria is dishonourable: Webster simply makes her behave as if she were honourable. This is an artistic insincerity—a lie in the poet's heart—of which Shakespeare would not have been guilty; but Webster, having no profound

---

[16]There is little need to emphasize the remarkable amount of animal-imagery in the two plays. As we should expect, most of the animals mentioned are ravenous or sinister.
[17]*W.D.*, I, 2, 218 (my italics).
[18]*W.D.*, IV, 2, 150.
[19]*W.D.*, V, 6, 276.
[20]*W.D.*, III, 2, 186 (Webster's italics).
[21]*W.D.*, IV, 1, 143 (Webster's italics).
[22]*Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who Lived about the Time of Shakspeare; with Notes.* (My italics).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hold on any system of moral values, found it easy to write for Vittoria dissembling verse which in its righteous simplicity seems to proclaim her honesty in the face of her accusers.

It is consonant with Webster's unbalanced outlook that the distinguishing mark of his Machiavellian 'heroes' is their individualism. In Shakespeare individualism is an infallible mark of villainy:

> Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.[23]

Like Richard III, Iago and Edmund in Shakespeare, Lodovico, the Cardinal, Bosola and Flamineo are all individualists, and all villains.

The atmosphere in which Webster's characters live is the atmosphere of a corrupt Court. The description of 'France' at the beginning of *The Dutchesse of Malfy* sets off the scene of Webster's play by contrast:

> In seeking to reduce both State, and People
> To a fix'd Order, the[ir] juditious King
> Begins at home . . .[24]

To point the contrast, Bosola—who is one of the 'dissolute, and infamous persons[25] who are banished from any healthy Court—enters just as this speech is finished. If Webster were an orthodox Elizabethan, the rest of the play would be an illustration of what happens in a state of which the Prince himself is evil:

> "Death, and diseases through the whole land spread.[26]

But while the atmosphere of the play is precisely the atmosphere described in these opening lines, there is in Webster, as we have already mentioned, no convincing statement of the positive aspect of Degree; we do not for a moment believe that when the Duke and Cardinal are dead the state of Amalfi will return to a condition of health and normality. While the atmosphere of Webster's plays is as unhealthy as that of 'Vienna' in *Measure for Measure*, there is in Webster no Messianic Duke to return and save the state from chaos. The 'mist' of the two plays is all-embracing: we can form no notion of another world which will be revealed when the rottenness of Amalfi has come to a head and been purged away. Comfortable words spoken at the end of *The White Divel* and *The Dutchesse of Malfy* carry no conviction; if we take evil away from Webster's world, nothing is left.

This explains the curious futility of all Webster's characters. When Bosola is asked how Antonio was killed, he answers:

> In a mist: I know not how,
> Such a mistake, as I have often seene
> In a play.[27]

---

[23] *Richard III*, V, 3, 236.
[24] *D.M.*, I, 1, 8.
[25] *D.M.*, I, 1, 10.
[26] *D.M.*, I, 1, 16.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Very similar in tone is the reply of the Duke in *The Dutchesse of Malfy*, when he is asked why he brought about the death of the Duchess; he replies that he had hoped to gain

An infinite masse of Treasure by her death.[28]

This explanation is so off-hand and perfunctory that it can only be termed an *excuse*: the Duke is in fact at a loss to find any plausible reason for his actions.

All Webster's characters, indeed, and particularly his most consummate 'politicians', have only the most tenuous hold on reality; they are characterized by the same 'motiveless malignity that Coleridge noticed in Iago. But whereas Iago is a subordinate character in *Othello*, so that we are prepared to accept the convention by which he is simply 'The Villain', a man who desires evil because it is his nature to do so, Webster's plays are almost entirely peopled by such characters.

Without adopting the attitude of the 'naturalistic' critic, we must maintain that there are too many inconsistencies in Webster's plays; and whereas inconsistencies are readily passed over when—as in Shakespeare—they are subservient to some important dramatic purpose, in Webster there is no deeper purpose than to make our flesh creep, and we feel an inevitable resentment.

There is in fact something a trifle ridiculous about Webster. When we have seen his two plays we have indeed 'supp'd full of horrors', and overheard 'talk fit for a charnel'. An irruption of real humour—humour of the Shakespearean sort—would knock Webster's waxworks into a cocked hat. He is too evidently bent on exploiting the emotions of his audience.

Webster, that is to say, is a decadent. He is decadent in the sense that he is incapable of realizing the whole of life in the form in which it revealed itself to the Elizabethans. By concentrating exclusively on the narrow aspect of life revealed in one mood, he threw the relations of the whole out of harmony. In his work the proper relations between the individual and society, between God and Man, are overthrown. The sensationalism of his plays is the stigma of an outlook on life as narrow as it is intense. Webster sees the human situation as a chaotic struggle, lit indeed by flashes of 'bitter lightning', but fated to sink again into a mist of confusion and sub-human activity.

IAN JACK.

---

[27] *D.M.*, V, 5, 120.
[28] *D.M.*, IV, 2, 304.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

D. H. LAWRENCE PLACED

The following letter to the Editors is timely: it will serve instead of the note that was to have been printed under *Comments* in this issue—a note provoked immediately by a dismissal of D. H. Lawrence in *The New Statesman and Nation* (the critic being the Literary Editor) as a 'clinical case', and by this passage, which appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* for December 18 last (the occasion being a review of Maupassant's *Bel Ami* in translation):

> 'He accepted without reserve the large part that sex has played in life—not least, in French life—and in French literature from the time of Rabelais and Ronsard. But his acceptance never sinks to the anatomical crudities of D. H. Lawrence, nor becomes, as with Lawrence, an obsession and a gospel'.

To this admirer of Maupassant it may be replied that, while there is only one *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in Lawrence's *œuvre*, even in the special undertaking of that book he is preoccupied with the assertion of spiritual values: it is Maupassant whose attitude to sex is crude. But the critical *flori legium* presented by Mr. Coombes shows how little such a reply is likely to abash the offender, who enjoys the consciousness of having with him a consensus of the *élite*. It would be easy, with a very little research, to extend the anthology to fill a whole number of *Scrutiny*. A year of the higher journalism would provide flowers enough to occupy many pages.

It is a disgraceful state of affairs, bearing out to the full Lawrence's diagnostic severities about the contemporary civilized mind. To hope that any appeal to the facts and the truth can avail against prepossession, conceit and insensibility so potently banded is perhaps vain. All the same, it had been intended to return to Lawrence in these pages. As Mr. Coombes says, the business of appraisal presents many complexities. But some critical treatment will be attempted in an early number of *Scrutiny*.

F.R.L.

DEAR SIRS,

Though from time to time there have been highly appreciative references to D. H. Lawrence in the pages of *Scrutiny* (and in the works of *Scrutiny* writers, notably in *The Great Tradition*), there has never been a full article on Lawrence in your Review. The subject is a complex one, and the *Scrutiny* writers are busy people. But such is the nature and quality of the great bulk of criticism on Lawrence that *Scrutiny* could undertake nothing more valuable, I believe, than a 'Revaluation'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I give below a number of quotations which, if taken all together, would come roughly to the impression of Lawrence that is current in 'educated' circles. Among the authors are one or two respected names, and to them I apologise for including them in this company. And some of the articles, etc., from which the quotations are taken are, on the whole, 'pro-Lawrence'; it is a pity that respected critics do not always make it clear that they are not bringing grist to the mills of the stupid or the nasty, when dealing with such a profound and complex theme as Lawrence. All the quotations seem to me sufficientlyunambiguous to justify my use of them in this connection.

Roger Dataller, in *The Plain Man and the Novel*:

'Since he had dismissed the brain for the belly-worship of his creed, the vision of a peaceful and rational society could have no attraction for him. He was an enemy of the mind; and though somehow he might have repudiated this as shrilly as he repudiated all accepted standards, he remained a mouthpiece of reaction in contemporary letters. The "mindless, eyeless, hysterical mass-consciousness", with which his work is identified has become the bane of modern Europe'.

D. S. Savage, in *The Personal Principle*:

'The significance of Lawrence lay in his life rather than in his works' . . . 'his refusal to allow art its due rights and to be himself the considerable artist which he potentially was' . . . 'Lawrence's abandonment of all that we understand by the spiritual heritage of the West and his turning to vital primitivism' . . . 'Because Lawrence was not a thinker' . . . 'Lawrence's view of life, his "biologism", which is a similarly retrogressive dissolution back into primary life, implies a refusal of spiritual values'.

V. S. Pritchett, in *The Living Novel*:

'Lawrence's teachings are interesting because they are a compendium of what a whole generation wanted to feel, until Hitler arose, just after Lawrence's death, and they saw where the dark unconsciousness was leading them. Seen in this light, Lawrence represented the last phase of the Romantic movement: random, irresponsible egotism, power for power's sake, the blood cult of Rosenberg. And Lawrence was representative, because tens of thousands of people in England and Europe were uprooted people, like himself'.

F. Swinnerton, in *The Georgian Literary Scene*:

'My belief is that the reputation of this author will decline. As men and women learn more about their own minds, his remarkable pioneer work will fall in importance . . . We shall be forced back upon his books as literature; and this test, without considerable reservation, they will not pass'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Legouis and Cazamian, in *A History of English Literature*:

'But it would be futile to try and lay the chief stress upon the artist in him: the artist in him is neither very great nor of the finest quality; Lawrence indeed would not rank so high as he does, but for the sombre enthusiasm that raises him above his own self'.

Norman Nicholson, in *Man and Literature*:

'In *St. Mawr* Lawrence the critic sets out with the Freudian interpretation in his mind to make up a story about a horse. But the symbol has not really caught fire in the mind of Lawrence the creator. As a result, the horse never takes on real symbolical significance, but becomes a sort of grotesque caricature of Lawrence himself. In his identification of himself with the horse Lawrence even goes so far as to make the wretched animal have no foals *because it doesn't want to* (Mr. Nicholson's italics). Lawrence, it should be remembered, had no children, nor did many of his characters'.

Compton Mackenzie, in *Literature in my Time*:

'. . . but for Lawrence, married to a German wife, pressed for money, and in poor health, the war annihilated reality. It plunged him into a miasma of morbid dreams' . . . 'It is not absurd to suggest that Walt Whitman was a happier D. H. Lawrence, the happiness being conferred by the physical vigour fate denied to Lawrence'.

Henry Miller, in *The Cosmological Eye*:

'Lawrence's animal natures, just because of their irreducible obscenity, are the purest bodies in our current literature. Animated by a metaphysical conception they act through obedience to fundamental laws of nature. Of these laws Lawrence admits his complete ignorance. He created his metaphysical world by faith; he proceeds only by intuition. He may have been utterly wrong, but he is absolutely consistent'.

Hugh Kingsmill, in *D. H. Lawrence*:

'Though without any of Nietzsche's nobility of character and capacity to endure neglect and solitude, Lawrence in his slight way often recalls Nietzsche, another poet enmeshed in the will, and solacing his impotence with dreams of new forms of life in which he would be the master'.

W. Empson, in a review of W. Y. Tindall's *D. H. Lawrence and Susan his Cow*:

'It is fair enough to laugh at Lawrence, who got into some absurd personal and intellectual positions, and no doubt for some people was a harmful leader. Hugh Kingsmill has done it recently very well, but he was funny with the human breadth that the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

subject requires'. (I may say here that though Mr. Kingsmill's book is probably not the 'repulsive little book' that Mr. Empson finds Mr. Tindall's to be, it is not, in my opinion, distinguished by 'human breadth' in its humour or in anything else).

Rex Warner, in *The Cult of Power*:

'And it seems to us now that his system, for all its fervour, was very largely negative, a mere assertion of his denial of the system of his upbringing. His God, for instance, must be the exact opposite of the "gentle Jesus" of his childhood' . . . 'Fascism finally succeeded, at least temporarily, in making the synthesis that eluded Lawrence'.

Stephen Spender, in *The Destructive Element*:

'There are two ways of regarding Lawrence. The first is, qualitatively, as I have done here, regarding especially the descriptive passages in his novels, and the Nature poems in *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers*. The other and more disappointing way is to consider him primarily as a preacher'.

There they are then. The fact that some of them are comical is little compensation. Though some of the critics are comparatively unknown, their works are in public libraries and their influence spreads.

Scrutiny writers are of course aware of the desperate state of affairs to be inferred from the quotations, but I don't feel that that makes this 'public challenge' superfluous. If *Scrutiny* doesn't do something about it, who else is likely to? 'One must speak for life and growth, amid all this mass of destruction and disintegration'.

H. COOMBES.

A GOOD BOOK ON MILTON

PARADISE LOST AND ITS CRITICS, by A. J. A. Waldock (*C.U.P.*, 8/6).

This is a book to be strongly recommended. A series of accidents has prevented its being reviewed as yet in these pages.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CULTURE AND DR. JOAD

Dr. Joad is sometimes criticized for being 'a popular philosopher'. The charge, I suppose, may not be out of place in the polemics of unpopular professionals who don't write for the Sunday papers, but as a layman I feel that the more volunteers for the perilous crossing of the oceans of sense and sensibility that to-day separate Culture from the Common Man probably the better for us all. We don't live in the eighteenth century, when rustics learned to read on Bunyan and *Tom Jones*; even less do we live in the Elizabethan age, when upper-class culture and popular culture (*pace* the Baconians and the Marxists) were inter-dependent. We live in the age of Hollywood. So the more Doctors Joad, probably the better for the general civilization we have to cope with at present, for no longer is it possible, as it was possible even so late as the mid-nineteenth century, for a man of average intelligence to absorb culture from his environment with no more formal training than a dame-school's.

They sometimes do great harm, of course, but that harm does not spring of necessity from their intention. If I single out Dr. Joad as a partial exception, it is by reason of the essentially uncivilized ideas of culture he holds and propagates, peculiar enough indeed but which he shares with a good many people round and about Portland Place and also with some of those who go through the Great Turnstile every week-end. I write as a literary journalist who has some slight inkling of non-journalistic standards; I venture to criticize him mainly in the light of a different experience of life from his own, and the different judgment of values it has imposed upon me.

No criticism of him would be fair were it not prefaced by some recognition of his general ability as a cultural interpreter to the Crowd. The trouble, of course, is that he himself often recognizes this ability, and the unchallengeable nature of his idea of culture, in a somewhat paltry, uncivilized manner. For instance, his book, *The Untutored Townsman's Invasion of the Country* (1946), contains admirable treatment of ideas that most readers of this magazine would endorse; no praise could be too high for the way in which Dr. Joad has assembled his material and the almost general persuasiveness of temper he employs. But on occasion he shows us a seamy side. He is under the delusion, astonishing in one who has obviously given thought to the relation of culture to the modern world, that the blindness to things of the spirit in the present age is a blindness peculiar to the working class, not a myopia common to all. Thus he is indignant at Lord Nuffield for having introduced into the streets of Oxford 'regiments of working-class folk and their women, who are alike blind to the beauty and ignorant of the traditions of the city to which they have been brought, and by their spiritual *no less than their bodily* presence, impede the appreciation of those who value the things that belong distinctively to Oxford . . . '.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now it becomes apparent from the context that Dr. Joad was writing in not quite so snobbish a spirit as the phrase I have italicized would suggest; but the slight qualification doesn't affect the fundamental issue and the real chance Dr. Joad has let slip of proving that his concern for beauty is not on a par with his concern for the right accent and the proper way of sporting old tweed jackets and baggy trousers. It would seem a good idea if folk like Dr. Joad (and their women) would attend to the beam in the eye of Oxford University before making so much fuss about the mote in the eye of Cowley Motors. Those who have used elementary observation at either Oxford or Cambridge or the provincial universities know to their shame and sorrow that it is not among the underdogs but among the undergraduates that the twentieth-century blindness to spiritual things shows most strikingly clear. What person who has passed through one of our universities, either on a B.A. course or on a bike, has not heard through the windows of university students jazz-noises that would apparently be more appropriate to East Side New York or to the imitation of it around Shepherds Bush? Jude the Obscure liked Oxford because of its sacred music—that was in the late nineteenth century. To-day a fair proportion of the undergraduate population prefer to this church music, and not for unorthodox reasons, the trumpery flourishings of a Louis Armstrong or a Nat Gonella. Some of these students admire this music of the mechanical age because they believe it is 'proletarian' or even 'folk', whereas the small part of the original song which had some connection with living people has for years now suffered a fate worse than death.

In the light of these facts, or opinions, it becomes puzzling to discover what respectable idea was going on in the mind of Dr. Joad when he shook his beaver so sadly over the spiritual and bodily presence of Lord Nuffield's workmen in the sacred streets of Oxford. He is no simple snob, that is evident. But, like many other products of King's, Balliol, etc., he is under the delusion that between the proportion of university students who prefer Carroll to Orlando Gibbons and the roughly equal proportion of 'working-class folk and their women' who uphold a similar preference there stretches a yawning gulf. The yawning gulf seems to me to consist simply of cash. This is no new thought; for a long time it has become clear to persons of average intelligence that a star-studded cabaret, for instance, in an exclusive hotel or night-club is simply a more vulgar, more obscene, more witless version of that 'entertainment of the masses' which folk like Dr. Joad constantly deplore. This is recognized, indeed, in about the last place where one would dream of recognition: the old-Etonian cabaret-star sums up his profession thus:

> Give them smut and give them dirt,
> In a clean white tie and a clean white shirt.

Whether this Frankau recognition is healthy or not I leave it to more qualified people to decide; but why pretend, as Dr. Joad seems

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to, that this form of culture comes from contact with the Lower Orders, when in reality (though I admit the inter-dependence) it is more the other way about, these sophisticated obscenities having almost driven out of popular affection the honest, near-Chaucerian vulgarity of *Knock'em in the Old Kent Road*?

The political history of the 'thirties, too, must give us pause before we accept Dr. Joad's astonishing division of this uncultural age into social classes. It was not simply material restraint, not even of the volunteer police-force that went mysteriously unmentioned in the newspapers,[1] it was not simply material power that prevented a bloody revolution around 1936. Nor was it simply the arms programme. The violent revolution, propagated day and night by the Eton Red-Tie Brigade, was definitely refused (as some of the Public-Schoolboy-Communists honestly admitted) by the harrassed, unemployed, Means-tested workers. The converts to the Gospel According to John Strachey were few and far between in the Distressed Areas, though they were more numerous in Oxford, Cambridge, Hampstead and the Isle of Wight. This preference for constitutional reform among those who had suffered the most from the incompetence and the callousness of our rulers was perhaps sadly dismissed by the Stracheys and the Upwards as the Last Relics of Petty-Bourgeois Inhibition. Such indeed it was, if we remove the Marxist sneer from our faces. For it had many precedents in the history of the decent working class, this preference for non-violent methods—many precedents in the tradition of those who met their Peterloo on the tennis-court at Versailles. Even in the dark days of the early nineteenth century, the London Working Men's Association told the Prime Minister, in the words of their secretary William Lovett, that 'so far from entertaining any idea of disturbing the public peace, we were readily disposed to aid the authorities in preserving it, having offered to be sworn in as special constables'. Readers of this magazine might like to contrast that reasonable attitude with the 'stark realism' of Mr. Rex Warner in *The Wild Goose Chase*: 'Even had they wished it, they knew that they could do nothing to stop the slaughter of policemen that was now taking place'.[2]

This preference for constitutional reform among the workers of the last decade, this preference itself has its cultural aspect. The average miner of the 1930's may have preferred the *News of the World* to the Bible, Bunyan, Milton and Burns which formed the educational background of poor radicals like Lovett, Bamford and Cooper in the even hungrier 1840's, but in his rejection of revolutionary methods, whether consciously or unconsciously, the miner was closer to that educational background, to the Christian and humanist traditions, than were upper-class poetasters like Day Lewis or Warner who blustered about 'the blood-red dawn' and 'the hammer, the sickle, the blood' in a thoroughly objectionable,

[1]See *The English Press, Newspapers and News*, by Jane Soames, with a Preface by Hilaire Belloc (Stanley Nott, 1936).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unrealistic, academic manner. So I don't think Dr. Joad has anything much to fear from the contact of university students of this common type with the horny-handed mob. There is such a thing, I would remind him, as a combination of delicate hands and horny intellect.

The equating of 'bodily' with 'spiritual presence' in the passage quoted was not a mere slip on Dr. Joad's part, for it becomes clear from other pages of his recent book (and of many other books and articles of his in the past) that he imagines culture to be synonymous with expensive eating and drinking—as do Miss Dorothy Sayers, Mr. Warwick Deeping, and many a jolly old Palinurus in such high places as *Horizon*, the *Tatler and Bystander* and the *New Statesman and Nation*. 'Bach fugues, Beethoven quartets, Château Yquem', Dr. Joad sighs reminiscently, not being aware apparently of Norman Douglas's discovery that the cult of the wine list and other gourmandizing is a comparatively recent institution and that gentlemen in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries knew nothing of those intricate details that trouble the horny intellect of a Bertie Wooster or a Lord Peter Wimsey. Douglas adds that the cult of the wine-list, etc., came in when true gentility, of the spiritual variety, was disappearing; it came in, in fact, with the *nouveau riche*.

All this makes it doubtful whether a reasonably alert reader can accept the principal bee in Dr. Joad's bonnet as being more than a drone. He is always extremely worried about 'the decline

---

[2]How far I am from promulgating a general sneer at Public-School and university education will be seen, I hope, when I record my gratitude to three non-working-class writers who have maintained the importance of the English bourgeois tradition—that tradition which has proved such a stumbling block, both in theory and in practice, to Marxist ideas. 'The English bourgeois, so-called, that is to say the member of English middle classes, is not only an organic part of the national society, he is nothing more or less than the average Englishman . . . Under modern conditions the middle classes have come to embrace so large a part of society that any attempt to eliminate them would inevitably result in the destruction of the whole social organism'. (Christopher Dawson: *Religion and the Modern State*, 1935). 'In moral outlook no one could be more "bourgeois" than the English working classes . . . In his own age and ours Dickens has been popular chiefly because he was able to express in a comic, simplified and therefore memorable form the native decency of the common man'. (George Orwell: *Inside the Whale*, 1940). 'We English *are* bourgeois; it is our achievement, not our failing. We have evolved a pattern of bourgeois life so radically tolerant that the proletariat can be absorbed into it. If the rest of Europe—Germany and France in particular—could have followed our example Europe might well have remained a political and cultural unity to-day'. (John Middleton Murry: in *The Adelphi*, 1946).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the general level of literary and dramatic taste, and the continuous erosion of the environment in which alone original thought and work in literature and art can be recognized and encouraged'. But 'In literature', wrote the Doctor in *The Book of Joad* (1932), 'my gods are still, as they were in 1912, Shaw and Wells and Bennett. Of the stars who have risen in the literary firmament since the war . . . none shine with a brilliance in any way comparable with those earlier luminaries'. Apparently it has never occurred to him that some people preferred, and still prefer, and for cultural-spiritual reasons, James and Conrad and Yeats to their contemporaries (speaking roughly), Shaw and Wells and Bennett; and that such people stand a better chance of appreciating Joyce, Lawrence, Forster, Owen, Thomas, Rosenberg, Pound, Eliot, Woolf, Dawson, Powys, Myers, etc., than people who agree with Chesterton that 'an artist is only a performing bear compared with the meanest man who fancies he has anything to say' or with Dr. Joad himself (I quote *The Book* again) that 'the object of writing is to convey meaning by asserting something, and style, I agree with Shaw, is simply effectiveness of assertion . . . He who has nothing to assert has no style and can have none'.

Some of these philistine judgments are repeated in *The Testament of Joad* (1937); and in *Philosophy for Our Times* (1940) he contrasts the present period, which he subheads as 'foreheads defiantly low', with the happy time of his youth: 'The effects of post-war debunking are to be seen in a deliberate and defiant lowbrowism. To be observed reading Shakespeare is a ground for shame; to be seen reading the *Daily Blank* or the *Pictorial Blanker* a cause for congratulation. The contemporary lowbrowism is not merely a matter of fact; it is an affirmation of values . . . The snobbery of culture has been replaced by a snobbery of anticulture. Tennyson, living in the Victorian age, maintained that man loved the highest when he saw it. It has been left to us to make the discovery that he is more likely to heave a brick at it'.

If Dr. Joad means by 'us' the happy time when he himself was growing to maturity, I can only agree; but he doesn't mean that, he means the 'moderns'. Yet it is surely obvious that the remarks of Chesterton, Shaw and their disciple, the Doctor himself; coupled with Wells' contempt for Shakespeare, G.B.S.'s classing of Dante and Milton as 'two of the greatest fools that ever lived', G.K.C.'s thinking it a *weakness* in Henry James that his novels 'don't infect us with the spirit of a schoolboy . . . ' surely it is quite plain that all this and Northcliffe had a great deal to do with the 'contemporary lowbrowism' that Dr. Joad thinks came in suddenly after 1918?

But it is not a question of citing names. 'The object of writing is to convey meaning by asserting something', 'an artist is only a performing bear compared with the meanest man who fancies he has anything to say', 'What did Shakespeare do? what did he add to the world's totality . . . ? If he had never lived, things would be very much as they are . . . He added no idea, he altered

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no idea, in the growing understanding of mankind'—remarks such as these (partly, I admit, just a healthy reaction to the Art-for-Art's-Sake cult of Pater, Wilde and Baron Corvo) limited literature to one small aspect of it, the argumentative, and must have had a great influence upon the lowbrowism that Dr. Joad claims he detests.

It will not be forgotten that G.B.S. was a brilliant and sensitive critic of music in the 'eighties and 'nineties of last century, and Dr. Joad confesses that 'whatever reservoir of æsthetic sensibility I possess has flowed into the channel of music', though 'since Beethoven died, practically no music has been written that I wish to hear'. (This strikes me as being rather a long period). The impersonal, artistic quality that Joad and Shaw presumably admire in music seems to be an affront to them in literature, where they insist on the dubious element of 'personality', of the egotistical, argumentative voice. It is worth glancing at what a great poet had to say upon this subject: 'A poet', wrote Keats, 'is the most unpoetical thing in existence, because he has no identity, he is continually informing and filling some other body'. The view of a contemporary poet is similar: 'Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion', says T. S. Eliot, 'but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality'. We can see, with all respect, why Dr. Joad so likes the preposterous poetaster Marchbanks, offered us in all seriousness by Shaw in *Candida*; and why there is a strong relation between the judgment of Mr. Beverley Baxter, M.P., in the *Radio Times* that '*Candida* is Shaw's best play' and the same gentleman's statement to the House of Commons that 'poetry is rightly regarded with suspicion by the British people'.

Chesterton, too, was a great admirer of the architecture of the Middle Ages, insisting on the 'impersonality' of it, but he didn't think much of the impersonal, architectural quality in the paintings of Cézanne, in the novels of James, Hardy and Conrad, in the plays of J. M. Synge. He preferred, as he honestly said, 'the art which is a by-product of propaganda'. He instanced Kipling's art (by-product of Imperialist propaganda) and Shaw's art (by-product of Fabianism), and it seems that Dr. Joad would agree in preferring this by-product to the art of James, Yeats, Synge, Conrad, and their modern successors. What Joad could have maintained with truth, I think, is that the late Victorians and the Edwardians produced *popular* novels of a quality we don't seem able to produce to-day; I am thinking of the best stories of Kipling, Conan Doyle, Wells, Belloc, Chesterton, and of Hardy and Conrad in their popular moments—genuinely popular achievements which have few counterparts at the present time. But the notion of literature which Dr. Joad shares with Shaw, Chesterton and Wells has a great deal to do with that separation of Highbrow from Lowbrow which he rightly deplores.

R. C. CHURCHILL.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A NOTE ON CONTEMPORARY 'PHILOSOPHICAL' LITERARY CRITICISM IN FRANCE

Mr. Turnell began a survey of French literary criticism in the nineteenth century (*Scrutiny*, Vol. VIII, Nos. 2 and 3) with the following remarks: ' "It will be our criticism, perhaps, that will most fittingly last longest", wrote M. Charles Maurras in a characteristic pronouncement. "A Sainte-Beuve and a Renan will have a good chance of making posterity one day forget the Flauberts, the Leconte de Lisles and perhaps even the Hugos". Frenchmen are sometimes extremely modest about their poets, but they are seldom modest about their critics. They have long regarded themselves as the great critics of the modern world and until lately no-one has ventured to challenge their supremacy'. Certainly in France to-day, the general impression one gathers is that, while the novel, say, may be in temporary decline, still recovering its breath, as it were, after Proust and Gide, there is no reason for thinking that satisfaction, if not general, is still wide-spread. M. Henri Peyre, for instance, in a survey of recent works on contemporary French literature[1] wrote, 'Il semble que nous vivions, depuis quatre ou cinq ans, à l'une des périodes les plus riches de la critique littéraire' and he based his high estimate of this criticism in part on 'le substratum de pensée et même de philosophie sur lequel elle repose'. We have indeed witnessed a strong invasion by writers trained in philosophy into the domains of the novel and the drama and notice has been taken in these pages of some of the results. The following is a preliminary investigation (and no more) into what may be loosely called 'philosophical' literary criticism in post-war France.

M. Henri Peyre provides a convenient starting point. The most notable French critics of the years 1945-6, he writes, 'sont de tour d'esprit philosophique (Maurice Blanchot, Claude-Edmonde Magny, Maurice Merleau-Ponty et Jean Pouillon) ou des sociologues (Jules Monnerot, Roger Caillois) et la littérature gagne à être ainsi enrichie par des manieurs d'idées . . . Enfin cette jeune critique semble avoir réalisé non sans bonheur la réconciliation entre l'université et la littérature vivante. La plaupart de ces interprètes des romanciers et des dramaturges d'aujourd'hui ont été formés aux méthodes universitaires; mais ils ont cessé de bouder ce qui se fait de grand, ou simplement de jeune et de neuf, autour d'eux'. This favourable verdict, I take it, would be generally countersigned in France.

---

[1] *The French Review*, Vol. XX, No. 5, March 1947; *cf. ibid.* Vol. XXI, No. 3, January 1948 in 'L'année Littéraire 1947', 'la critique en France est toujours de premier ordre'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Occasionally this sense of possessing superior equipment has led French critics to rediscover or to 'revalue' English authors. Waugh and Greene, it appears, have been enjoying a vogue in France. The following[2] will serve to illustrate the position: 'Il est curieux de comparer l'accueil fait en France aux livres de Graham Greene et l'opinion qu'en forme le lecteur anglais moyen. Même pour un certain public, pourtant au courant de la chose littéraire, *Brighton Rock* n'est qu'un excellent roman quasi policier, l'équivalent d'un roman de Simenon . . . Le bon Anglais ne consent qu'avec une stupéfaction un peu amusée, et fort réticente, à admettre les implications métaphysiques que le Français averti, à la suite de quelques critiques de qualité, découvre dans cet ouvrage. Nous voyons dans Graham Greene le Bien et le Mal, la Conscience, la Fatalité, et Kafka et Faulkner, que saisje? La lecture de ses romans devient un plaisir d'intelligence et de découverte. Et le jeu est au moins aussi amusant, aussi profitable que la pratique des mots croisés. Mais les Anglais hochent la tête et refusent de jouer'.

If we turn to the French translation of *Brighton Rock*,[3] we find that it contains a preface, signed 'C.E.M.', which might have inspired the above remarks. C.E.M. there asserts that 'le thème fondamental du *Rocher de Brighton* est sans doute la notion de la Fatalité, cette idée qui hante une grande partie du roman contemporain comme elle obsède secrètement la conscience moderne, et qui risque de la hanter chaque jour un peu plus à mesure que s'imposera plus complètement l'idée que l'absurde est la vérité dernière sur la condition humaine. On la retrouverait également présente dans les oeuvres aussi dissemblables que celles de Faulkner (chez qui elle est vraiment la déesse voilée du *Sanctuaire*), de Steinbeck, de John O' Hara, dans *L'Etranger*, d'Albert Camus, voire chez Raymond Queneau ou chez Dos Passos pour citer pêle-mêle quelques noms . . . C'est sans doute l'oeuvre de Graham Greene qui permet de former l'idee la plus exacte, la plus ontologiquement juste de cette fatalité. Ses romans, et singulièrement *Le Rocher de Brighton*, offrent la trame d'événements concrets qui incarne le mieux cette notion, qui en est le "corrélat objectif" (pour reprendre l'expression de T. S. Eliot) le plus minutieusement adapté. On peut résumer en quelques mots cette idée en disant: la Fatalité est une situation. Elle est même la situation par excellence, puisqu'elle se confond avec le fait que l'homme est inséparable de sa condition, identique à la place qu'il occupe dans le monde, avec l'impossibilité où il est de s'en abstraire. Il s'imagine généralement le pouvoir (c'est bien souvent en cela qu'il croit que consiste sa liberté) mais cette possibilité est purement théorique, illusoire'. In fact, as C.E.M. admits, 'on aura reconnu ici un thème abondamment dévelopé par la philosophie existentialiste, par Sartre dans l'*Etre et le Néant*, et

[2]From an article by Jean-Louis Curtis in *La Table Ronde*, No. 1, January 1948.
[3]Robert Laffont, 1947.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

avant lui par Gabriel Marcel dès son premier *Journal Métaphysique*'.

A protest was made against this attempt to 'sartrise' Greene,[4] but it is perhaps more interesting to enquire into the assumptions which made such an identification possible. It would appear at first sight to be a tribute to the distracting power of a philosophic bias that no mention is made in the preface of what Graham Greene is actually offering in *Brighton Rock*. A passing allusion to Bernanos is the only reference to the unfree pre-occupation with the conditions of salvation and damnation which characterizes Greene's work and serves to distinguish him from a crowd of otherwise equally undistinguished novelists and detective story writers. It is less surprising to note that the philosophic bias seems to be allied to a defect of sensibility. C.E.M. describes the principal characters of *Brighton Rock* as 'aussi concrets que des personnages de Dickens, dont les créatures de Graham Greene (Ida, par example) ont parfois la puissante vulgarité'. More significant still, the literary development of Graham Greene is seen as analogous to that of . . . Melville. Did not Melville begin his career with adventure stories? (Greene's 'entertainments'). Are not *Moby Dick* and *Benito Cereno* full of sensational incidents? And 'à chaque instant, comme chez Melville, nous avons l'impression que le drame concret qui se joue devant nous renvoie, pour être pleinement compris, à une tragédie différente de lui, qui se déroule sur un autre plan, *métaphysique* celui-là au sens stricte du terme'.

This is the main assumption: that Graham Greene's *oeuvre* is an attempt to express a truth which can be fully grasped only by a long series of analytic arguments. 'De longues analyses seraient nécessaires pour mettre au jour, sous sa forme abstraite, et dans toute sa complexité, cette vérité unique que les divers récits de Graham Greene ont essayé d'exprimer, chacun à sa façon, sous des aspects divers mais également concrets, et non sans l'ambiguité peut-être inséparable de la forme romanesque. C'est ainsi qu'on pourrait tirer de *La Puissance et la Gloire* une conception de la trahison comme situation ontologique ou de *L'Agent Secret* des vues sur ce qu'on pourrait appeler l'*inespoir*, distinct du désespoir en ce qu'il est lui aussi (comme la trahison) une situation objective, une structure du monde, et non pas un état d'âme ou une attitude d'esprit plus ou moins subjective, placée en tous cas sous la dépendance de la volonté'.

It would be absurd to continue to 'éplucher' any further what is after all only a short preface, a marginal essay. The purpose I have wanted to make it subserve is to present in a condensed form the gist of the argument of a longer work which has been regarded as one of the most remarkable productions of modern French criticism, *Les Sandales d'Empédocle*, by Claude-Edmonde Magny.[5] The book is remarkable among those of its kind in that the essays on Charles Morgan, Kafka and J.-P. Sartre are preceded by an

[4]By J.M. in *Critique*, June 1948.
[5]Editions de la Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1945.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

essay on the nature and function of literary criticism. One French critic, at least, does not regard the previous history of French criticism as wholly admirable. The failing of previous critics is thus expressed: 'S'ils ont manqué de lucidité, c'est moins à l'égard des auteurs qu'envers leurs propres dons et surtout concernant la mission du critique'.

From a book abounding in arguments I have selected what I regard as 'characteristic and unacceptable' in contemporary 'philosophic' literary criticism in France. (A more extended commentary could, I well believe, be written, particularly on the seeming paradox that French critics appear at the same time unduly dependent on literature for their sustenance and unduly contemptuous or negligent of its specific virtues and characteristics. But as communications are still very much the preserve of V.I.P. in the critical world and French books are still comparatively hard to obtain in England, the reader may prefer the present 'nibble' to a general arraignment based on evidence he could not control).

Philosophy to-day, the argument runs, is starving: it cannot continue to feed on itself as it is trying to do.[6] Its indispensable pabulum is to be found (apart from the sciences) in literature, which contains the raw material in a purer or more digestible form than life. This raw material is not to be gathered on the surface—as is so often the practice of French critics—the valuable 'message' or 'doctrine' does not lie in the overt snippets of philosophical statement a novel, for instance, may contain, but is implicit in the work and usually not part of the artist's conscious intention. (This is an attempt to dispose of the objection that a philosophical treatise would provide more valuable material than a novel).

Nevertheless the value of the successful novel does not lie in the perfect embodiment of a 'vérité' or a 'vision du monde'. On the contrary, the sapphire is embedded (often beyond recovery) in the mud. 'Lorsque l'idée s'exprime en un oeuvre pleinement et uniquement littéraire, elle se charge d'une sorte de mauvaise graisse, d'une gangue qui adhère à elle et dont le critique ne pourra l'isoler quelles que subtiles que soient les distillations fractionnées auxquelles il se livre'. Literature is essentially impure.

The critic's task is to refine away the baser elements by a process of abstraction. In this way what was unconscious and incoherent in the work is made conscious and coherent, if the novel is genuine. The effort is in short to give wherever possible a *conceptual equivalent* of the author's vision by reducing it to its abstract structure. Thus it is claimed that one of the essay's in the book 'a montré qu'on pouvait trouver dans l'oeuvre de Kafka une théorie de la responsabilité, des vues sur la causalité, enfin une interprétation d'ensemble de la destinée humaine, suffisament toutes trois et assez indépendantes de leur forme romanesque pour

[6] *Cf. L'Age de Raison*: 'il se vit tout entier, béant: pensée, pensées sur des pensées, pensées sur des pensées de pensées, il était transparent jusqu'à l'infini et pourri jusqu'à l'infini'.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

supporter d'être transposées en termes purement intellectuels et ne rien perdre de leur unité intérieure et de leur force persuasive. Cela fonde en quelque sorte la valeur métaphysique de l'oeuvre'.

The latent vision in the work of art can only gain by being thus brought to light. 'L'appréhension d'une idée sous forme abstraite en donne une possession plus sûre, semble-t-il, que le pressentiment parfois vague à l'excès de cette idée que peut nous donner une métaphore charnelle'. Criticism is thus more lucid than literature. It exhibits its superiority by moving away from literature towards something higher. For when the critic has 'gutted' the individual work, his next task is to recognize his extract as essentially a partial, one-sided statement which requires completion or neutralizing by comparison with other statements similarly derived. This process is described as a gradual progression towards or in terms of 'la vie spirituelle'. The novel is a footprint or spoor showing where 'vie spirituelle' has been. The critic's aim is to 'vivre la vie spirituelle de façon aussi abstraite, aussi dépouillée que possible'. In this slow ascension, the value of literature is to provide a stage on the journey, but only a stage. 'Un moment viendra où elle devra s'effacer devant la philosophie . . . '

This is the central theme of the book, which is described in a prefatory note as 'un essai qui cherche—entre autres choses—à montrer que toute oeuvre finie, littéraire ou philosophique, peut être seulement une étape provisoire dans un devenir spirituel plus vaste qu'elle-même'. Or, as it is put on a later page, 'Ainsi littérature, critique et finalement philosophie, seront les trois étapes de l'ascension humaine vers la lumière'. Now, for anyone who does not regard the underlying notion as absurd, attention will be at once directed to the examination of the final term which gives meaning to the scale. The author does not claim to have reached the summit by any means, but there is disquieting evidence of what values may have governed the ascent. Thus in the pages where this theme is given its last treatment, one of the works mentioned as having to be surmounted and kicked away before the *salto mortale* from the extreme tip is made is Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*. More astonishing is that of the three authors considered at length, one is Charles Morgan. True, Morgan's 'ideas', 'doctrine', or 'message' when duly abstracted are found to be contradictory. Nevertheless, he remains 'un romancier incomparable' and we hear of 'la perfection organique de Sparkenbroke'. One wonders, too, what to make of this: 'Mais qui de nous, pour penser son amour, n'a eu recours à Morgan, à Meredith, à Stendhal?' Indeed the closer we come to the actual text of Morgan's novels the stronger is the impression that the critic's standards are of a strange order.

Consider, for instance, this account of the last chapter of *The Fountain*. 'Quand Lewis et Julie, tels Adam et Eve, sortent chassés du Paradis terrestre d'Enkendaal, les Anges se voilent la face de leurs ailes en les regardant passer et pleurent sur l'échec de tout effort humain; nous avons l'impression d'assister à quelque catastrophe cosmique, inéluctable, telle la mort de Baldur ou la

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chute de l'Olympe'. After this, it is hardly surprising to find the following estimate of Morgan's female characters: 'Il a enrichi la littérature de quelques figures de femmes d'une délicatesse et en même temps d'une vérité (non pas certes au sens banal d'une vérité-copie!) inégalées avant lui, auprès de qui pâlissent les héroïnes les plus séduisantes de Stendhal et de Balzac . . . Le seul romancier, peut-être, qui ait su peindre des femmes aussi délicieuses, serait Meredith . . . ' In fact the whole essay on Morgan is a testimony to the help that may be obtained from an intellect trained on philosophy in confirming a powerful initial seduction due to want of natural taste or acquired sensibility.

Les Sandales d'Empédocle thus appears to offer no exception to Mr. Turnell's general rule. 'It is one of the consequences of a training in philosophy that it encourages the Frenchman's natural tendency to abstraction, to manipulate counters . . . which instead of illuminating the work under discussion have precisely the opposite effect; they take the critic's mind off his text and carry him into a realm of abstract theorising for which the work of art is merely a pretext . . . others are prevented by the excellence of their philosophical equipment from making that full and unfettered response to the work of art which is the basis of all criticism'.

An awkward consequence of this manner of treating literature (also noted by Mr. Turnell) is that one is almost forced to create an opposition between the kernel valuable to the philosophic critic and the literary rind. Various statements in the book, such as, 'les beautés littéraires seront étroitement solidaires des perfections spirituelles', point to the desire to overcome the opposition, but in these matters it is the critical practice that counts and in the essays we note, for instance, 'le style de Sartre mériterait une étude spéciale' and 'les qualités du style de Kafka, qui vaudrait à lui seul toute une étude'. Not until these studies have been made will it be clear, to me at any rate, that stylistic considerations can be of the slightest value to the philosophic approach. (The author is evidently fascinated by recent studies on the syntax of certain authors. Even punctuation, it appears, has philosophic possibilities, but it is doubtful whether a full exposure to style in the widest sense, including the all too fleshly metaphors, could yield the abstract—three sentences long—which is the end product of philosophic inspection. There is, however, no knowing what may not come out of the hat, seeing what has already emerged. The immediate point is that the philosophic method seems to work apart from and without the stylistic approach).

A more serious defect of this type of criticism is that it seems incapable of giving an account of the way a novel is organized, of its essential structure. The critic seems content to leave the matter at this level: 'roman ou poème ne sont guère moins des "systèmes" que le cartésianisme ou le hégélianisme'. And her passing references are all of an analytic kind, to 'character', 'syntax', 'vocabulary', 'style', 'technique d'exposition'.

* * * *

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If the main service of *Les Sandales d'Empédocle* is to provide a warning, there nevertheless remain scattered through the work a number of interesting asides, particularly on the principles of an approach to Kafka. Indeed an anthology of remarks could be collected quite contrary to the spirit of those I have selected. This is a first book and the author's thought appears to have matured between 1939 and 1945, the dates of the first and last essays. Since then a number of interesting articles have appeared in various periodicals, though none of those I have been able to obtain altogether transcends the limitations of the 'philosophic' approach. The reader of this book will also find an account of *La Nausée* which differs in many points from that given in these pages, though I am bound to add that it has not led me to modify my opinion.

H. A. MASON.

PURITAN BUNYAN

JOHN BUNYAN, L'HOMME ET L'OEUVRE, by Henri A. Talon (Editions 'Je Sers', Paris, 700fr.).

It is not unusual for French scholars to produce definitive books, and Dr. Talon's *Bunyan* may stand with Castelain's *Jonson*, Legouis' *Marvell*, and Dottin's *Defoe*, to take related instances. Like them he has addressed his work primarily to French readers, yet has digested so much English writing that his study will be more esteemed on this side of the Channel and should supplant the books written in our own language. *John Bunyan, L'Homme et L'Oeuvre* is an attempt to focus upon the most important facts which does not become psychological or economic pathology.

By the biographical facts, and especially by an acute study of *Grace Abounding*, Dr. Talon vindicates his author from the suggestion made in W. York Tindall's *John Bunyan, Mechanick Preacher*:[1]

> 'Se confesser le plus grand des pêcheurs, par example, ce n'est pas imiter tel ou tel, mais essayer de se convaincre qu'on est sauvé. Non pas jeu de rhêteur, mais interrogation anxieuse d'une âme'.

This is the core of Puritan theology. The problems of election and rejection created a community of interest among the sects and without an appreciation of the import of such terms to a widely-ranging audience the merit of its literary expression, expository or (in Bunyan's case) creative, cannot be assessed or the appropriate response reawakened. To this end, one feels that Dr. Talon might have extended his analyses of *Pilgrim's Progress*, for these chapters most of all need amplification with the experience of the elected

[1]Reviewed in *Scrutiny*, Vol. VI.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

author of *Grace Abounding*. The biographical nature of the allegory appears more fully from an article by Roger Sharrock, which was published after Dr. Talon's book had gone to press.[2]

Dr. Talon reminds us that a popular homiletic tradition persisted which related Bunyan to Langland, but in spite of his sympathy with the work of Professor Owst, some of the documents he produces from the Middle Ages to support his thesis are but tenuously applied in his work. His knowledge of the lesser works of the Elizabethan period is perhaps susceptible of expansion, although few English scholars who are not specialists in the field of religion could show more complete bibliographies of an intensive search through the secondary sources. Chief among the exhibits Dr. Talon uses Arthur Dent's *Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven*, a most popular Elizabethan pocket-book, which should provide the starting-point in any discussion of Bunyan, since it was a book he received as a dowry, owed his conversion to, and incorporated to a certain extent in his *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Life and Death of Mr. Badman*. It is a religious dialogue in which the themes of regeneration and reprobation are discussed in vivid dramatic contrasts of character and lively popular speech. To Arthur Dent, drunkenness causes social problems—

> 'mis-spending all their time and money in gaming, rioting, swearing, staring, swilling, bezelling, bibbling, brawling, and brabling while their poor wives and children sit crying at home for bread, being ready to starve, to beg or to steal'

—but is primarily an ethical offence. Defoe, a writer with whom it is profitable to relate Bunyan as a Dissenter in an eighteenth-century *milieu*, treats sins in his religious writings almost solely as contrary to good manners. He used the same formulæ of human depravity but the Puritan conscience had lost the habit of subtle casuistry. The Dissenting academies were equipped, with their Modern studies, for the production of the journalist rather than the preacher. The author of *Moll Flanders* wrote religious dialogues called *The Family Instructor*, which reveal an ideal inferior to Bunyan's. They are incredibly lachrymose and attack sin with an uncertain touch:

> ' "Jack, God damn me, how do'st do? How hast thou done this long time, by God?" and then they kiss; and the t'other, as lewd as himself, goes on: "Dear Tom, I am glad to see thee with all me heart, let me die" '.

The connection of Dent and Defoe involves Bunyan, but it is less fully explained here than one could have wished. More, too, might have been said about the Puritanism of the Elizabethan period than is known to the political histories. M. M. Knappen's *Tudor*

[2] *Spiritual Autobiography in Pilgrim's Progress*, R.E.S., April 1948, a valuable critical approach.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Puritanism is, indeed, cited, but the merit of the closing chapters of that book, which deal with social and economic trends of nonconformist thought, is not disclosed by Dr. Talon's use of them. *The Character of an Old English Puritan,* written in 1646 by John Geree[3] states the domestic aspect more fully and proposes the difference between the Tudor and Stuart nonconformists. Chief among the latter whom Dr. Talon quotes is Richard Baxter. He was an educated writer but he found difficulty in retaining that popular contact which is part of the achievement of George Herbert, Ben Jonson and Arthur Dent. Baxter tried to write a popular religious handbook, *The Poor Man's Family Book,* but failed to achieve the success of the *Plain Man's Pathway,* which he took as a model of diction and approach to his readers. Such a contact denied him, he excused himself 'I may suppose that riper Christians need not so loose a style or method as the ignorant and vulgar do'. His own *Autobiography* expresses his contempt for the mechanick preachers:

> 'For any more particular account of heart-occurrences, and God's operations upon me, I think it somewhat unsavoury to recite them'.

Bunyan was not of the Restoration ethos but of the Elizabethan-Jacobean.

Dr. Talon's account of the major works of Bunyan goes deeper than English criticism. He is, however, uncertain of the meaning of Mr. Ignorance, in spite of the extent of the literature on religious hypocrisy from which Bunyan and his fellows might have learned to recognize him. To such a reader, Ignorance is the Pharisee, the subject of an earlier tract by Bunyan himself. Attentive Puritans were assured of the danger lurking in the Hypocrite who could deceive others into pride and self-delusion. He enters the *Pilgrim's Progress* when the pilgrims are at their last stand, and is heralded, significantly, by the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains, who are explaining the damnation that awaits those who encroach upon the celestial path. His fate is no less important than Christian's: his rejection is essential to the scheme of the book.

Those who know their Bunyan well will best be able to use this book in reconsideration. They will appreciate the analysis of the prose and the careful treatment of his social and religious thought, while noting that the extra-literary investigations are auxiliary to the main theme. The emergent social thought is close to that recently described by Dr. Schenk in his *Concern for Social Justice in the Puritan Revolution*:

> 'The central and dominant tradition of Christianity has always accepted social as well as natural inequality, but it has demanded the permeation of all social relationships by the Christian spirit'.

---

[3]Quoted incidentally by Dr. Talon. The whole text of this useful document appears in *Church Quarterly Review*, April 1949.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This may enable us to understand some of the peculiar political problems of the century and explain why Bunyan, in spite of early tendencies in the opposite direction, allowed the poor to remain in their fore-ordained state in *The Holy War*. He was no Christian Communist: he derives his radicalism from teaching of of mediæval affiliations. To complete Dr. Talon's picture, R. B. Schlatter's *Social Ideas of the Religious Leaders*, 1660-1688 (one of the few omitted from his bibliography) should be consulted for the fullest account of contemporary social theory.

The patient insistence on the qualities of the work itself is the most admirable thing about this book; it tends to reassert the due order in literary criticism from which our own Ignorances have fallen, and makes the most of the occasion of a doctoral thesis. Its value will be felt by future students to have increased their critical perception, although notes and queries of all sorts may add to their factual knowledge. In this book the data of the conflict between Puritanism and Humanism are assembled—the influence of the folklore ballad, the religious allegory, the mediæval drama, the homily and primer, the ecclesiastical and moral discipline which did not inhibit the pious pilgrims from singing, playing and dancing on their way, or even from sudden leaps into the air in their rapture.

In concluson it may be said that a renewed acquaintance with Bunyan will convince Dr. Talon's readers that a central study in English civilization remains to be completed. This—which links *Piers Plowman* to the *Pilgrim's Progress*, as we have learned, would establish an even longer and more substantive tradition from *The Ancren Riwle* to Hannah More, of interest to students of religious, social and literary history—the tradition of popular moral theology. It is exemplified by Dent, Herbert, Bunyan, Baxter, and Defoe, and many other writers who will be adequately estimated only when the importance of this genre is acknowledged and its texts revived.

MAURICE HUSSEY.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MR. ELIOT AND EDUCATION[1]

Mr. Eliot is chiefly concerned, not with an attempt to prescribe the means by which a self-conscious 'culture' (in Arnold's sense of the self-cultivation of the individual) may be acquired, but with defining those general social conditions, in the absence of which a high state of culture is unlikely to exist. He therefore admits, though he nowhere defines the standards by which the relative state of culture at any one moment may be determined, the possibility of higher and lower states of culture. To him, that society is likely to achieve a high state of culture which permits at once the differentiation and the inter-communication of its people, as between their various classes, regions and sects. 'It is a recurrent theme of this essay, that a people should be neither too united nor too divided, if its culture is to flourish' (p. 50). Thus, to take the classes for instance, 'Neither a classless society nor a society of strict and impenetrable social barriers is good; each class should have constant additions and defections; the classes, while remaining distinct, should be able to mix freely; and they should all have a community of culture with each other which will give them something in common, more fundamental than the community which each class has with its counterpart in another society' (p. 50). The survival of the culture of the 'higher' class is 'dependent upon the health of the culture of the people' (p. 35). Yet, 'If any definite conclusions emerge from this study, one of them is surely this, that culture is the one thing we cannot deliberately aim at . . . Even if these conditions with which I am concerned seem to the reader to represent desirable social aims, he must not leap to the conclusion that these aims can be fulfilled solely by deliberate organization' (p. 19). The reason for this lies in the fact that 'culture can never be wholly conscious . . . it cannot be planned because it is also the unconscious background to our planning' (p. 94). It is not to be regarded as the 'sum of several activities, but (as) a way of life' (p. 41). The health and coherence of a culture depend to a considerable extent on the degree of *unconscious* communication that can take place among its peoples, so that in social intercourse there is an implied reference to a background of common assumptions that makes one person intelligible to another. Thus, no person who is not *of* the culture can ever hope completely to understand, intellectually, the nature of that culture. And no person who is of the culture can ever hope completely to express the culture in objective terms. 'For to understand the culture is to understand the people, and this means an imaginative understanding. Such understanding can never be complete: either it is abstract—and the essence escapes—or else it is *lived*' (p. 41). This leads Mr. Eliot to question one of the most cherished assumptions of modern educational policy—the idea of

[1]Intended as a contribution to a symposium on *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* (*Faber*, 10/6).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

equality of opportunity. To give effect to such a notion, he thinks, would lead to too great a social fluidity; it is dependent upon an '*atomic* view of society'. The élites, thus chosen, 'will consist solely of individuals whose only common bond will be their professional interest: with no social cohesion, with no social continuity. They will be united only by a part, and that the most conscious part, of their personalities; they will meet like committees' (p. 47).[1]

Mr. Eliot's outlook is so different from that which informs so many of the writers on education at the moment, products, as most of them are, of an unthinking acceptance of the superficial social catch-phrases of the day and well content to swim with the stream, that his book is bound to stimulate where it is honestly read and pondered. It is interesting to consider, for a moment, where he differs from Arnold. To Arnold culture was to be 'the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know on all the matters which most concern us, the best that has been thought and said in the world, and, through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically'. Arnold was aware that cultural health was more than a matter for the individual and that the individual's capacity for cultural self-realization was closely bound up with the general state of society.[2] But he could still quite without inhibitions recommend a course of self-cultivation that would at once liberate the individual and benefit the society of the time. His distinction between 'doing' and 'thinking' implied a contrast between unself-conscious or unexamined action (the action of those, that is to say, who 'swim with the stream') and action consciously deliberated in accordance with the notions derived from the best that was thought and known (though it should be noted in passing that he condemned 'abstract systems of renovation applied wholesale'). He wrote, however, when self-consciousness was interpreted as a *freeing* of the personality from 'stock notions and habits', and, too, from the vices of 'Jacobinism'. To increase the range of one's susceptibilities and of one's sensitivities, to avoid narrowness and provinciality, to seek an *inward* perfection so as

[1]It must be understood that I have summarized above only those parts of Mr. Eliot's book which seem to me to be useful in a discussion of the more immediate educational implications of his outlook. Thus, a vitally important part of his thesis—the 'relationship' between religion and culture—has been omitted.

[2]'Culture . . . leads us . . . to conceive of true human perfection as a *harmonious* perfection, developing all sides of our humanity, and as a *general* perfection, developing all parts of our society. For if one member suffer, the other members must suffer with it; and the fewer there are that follow the true way of salvation the harder that way is to find' (*Culture and Anarchy*).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to develop the 'best self' and help make 'sweetness and light' prevail, such notions rest on the assumptions, firstly, that culture is something that, with goodwill, can be acquired, and secondly, that the *same* culture ought to be acquired by everyone. 'The men of culture are the true apostles of equality'. Such notions spring from that very liberal ethos that Arnold was in certain respects to condemn. Despite, too, his hostility to abstract systems, the implications of Arnold's outlook demanded the application of abstract notions, derived admittedly from the best that was thought and known, to concrete realities. The tendency was for living to become, not a process of being, but the result of self-conscious manipulation. The educational imperatives are obvious. The teacher is to teach, is to make 'reason and the will of God prevail'. The detailed syllabus was not laid down; but the injunction to work for 'sweetness and light' was unequivocal. Such notions form the background of assumption of much modern educational policy.

It is perhaps the revelation of the subconscious depths of the human mind that has, in the intervening period, made the critic self-conscious about self-consciousness. Just as in our moral life, the self-conscious pursuit of moral ideals has tended to bring about a situation where 'it will appear more important to have the right moral ideal, than to act',[3] so the realization that our cultural life is dependent on 'those contacts and mutual influences at a less conscious level, which are perhaps even more important than ideas' (p. 38) tends to make Mr. Eliot sceptical about the effectiveness of conscious cultivation: 'The more education arrogates to itself the responsibility, the more systematically will it betray culture' (p. 107).

Such notions, at their root, are not, of course, novel. Mr. Eliot's scepticism springs from a dissatisfaction with a particular conception of self-conscious rationalism that, for instance, Keats was questioning when he wrote 'I have never yet been able to perceive how any thing can be known for truth by consequitive reasoning';—though Keats added, 'and yet it must be'. There is in many walks of life a distinction to be noted between 'doing' and 'knowing how to do' which may be said to correspond to the difference to be made between being cultured and knowing about culture. Though whether the fact of knowing about—becoming, that is to say, self-conscious about—*necessarily* inhibits 'being' it is hard to say. Certainly no man has made a more distinguished contribution to the criticism of his day than Mr. Eliot; and no man

[3] *Cf.* Michael Oakeshott: *The Tower of Babel* (*Cambridge Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2). This seems an appropriate moment to draw attention to Mr. Oakeshott's interesting contributions to that journal. Those who find Mr. Eliot's approach sympathetic will receive further illumination from the article quoted above and also from *Rationalism in Politics* (*C.J.*, Vol. I, Nos. 2 and 3). In the latter article, Mr. Oakeshott examines the error of Post-Renaissance Rationalism 'in its belief that nothing but benefit can come from making inquiry self-conscious').

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has practised more successfully as a poet. The fact, then, that Mr. Eliot has achieved a greater degree of self-consciousness about the nature and function of the poetic art than practically any other living Anglo-Saxon has not inhibited Mr. Eliot from also achieving the greatest success in the practice of that art, though it may indeed have helped to mould the particular nature of his creative writing. Moreover, Mr. Eliot's awareness of the fact that communication exists on levels that are partly subconscious in itself springs from a consciousness of such levels. And whereas such an awareness might well lead Mr. Eliot to question certain loose claims for education, they should not necessarily lead him to quite the degree of scepticism about education (conceived of as conscious instruction) that at times he seems to imply. For whereas it may be that the 'art of living' or, to use Mr. Eliot's term, a 'way of life' can never quite be consciously achieved, no life worth living can ever be satisfactorily lived at an unself-conscious level. (One has only to bear in mind George Eliot's strictures on the 'men of safe traditional views'). The possible source of Mr. Eliot's bias can be detected, perhaps, in his use of the word 'growth'. After discussing the possibility of a further decline in culture, followed, it may be, by a period when there will be no culture, he states 'Then culture will have to grow again from the soil; and when I say it must grow again from the soil, I do not mean that it will be brought into existence by any activity of political demagogues' (p. 19). (A pointer in the same direction is an occasional tendency to associate consciousness with artificiality).[4] Yet the implied metaphoric comparison between the growth of a culture and the growth of the crops of the earth is surely a false one. For indeed, the laws that govern the growth of a culture and those that govern the growth of a seed, whatever they may be in either case, are certainly not the same. Into man's development enters at least a limited capacity to shape his own ends and a consciousness of them which is entirely foreign to the development of the fruits of the earth. Thus to speak of a culture, a 'way of life', as growing from the soil is to colour the notion of culture in a particular way, to stress the unself-conscious aspects in a manner which weights the scales against conscious effort. Again, Mr. Eliot is concerned to define the word culture. Yet at one moment he speaks of culture as a way of life; the next, he speaks of the possibility of there being no culture, which at least suggests that he is himself equating culture with the more self-conscious aspects of the 'way of life'. For indeed it is impossible to conceive of human beings as continuing to exist without following something that is describable as a way of life and therefore, having a culture within the meaning of the term that Mr. Eliot is concerned to establish.

Now it may be argued that in all this there is a certain petty-

[4]Thus Mr. Eliot speaks of 'something artificial, something a little too conscious, about a community of people with strong local feeling, all of whom had come from somewhere else' (p. 52).

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fogging and that Mr. Eliot's thesis is sufficiently clear without these niggling attempts to trip him up. But I do not think so; for it seems to me that such confusions—if I have interpreted them aright—reveal the contradictions inherent in Mr. Eliot's pessimism and determinism. There is indeed something subtly debilitating about Mr. Eliot's diagnosis, and it is therefore of particular importance to detect any weakness in that account, any hint that would help to define the incompleteness of Mr. Eliot's account. What Mr. Eliot in effect does is to posit an ideal state in which a high condition of culture might be achieved—a state which, incidentally, bears a significant relationship to the Platonic conception of the 'just' state—and then imply that as such an ordering of society cannot be induced by conscious volition, all we can do is to await the inevitable cultural decline. The awareness of the imperfection of human consciousness, instead of spurring the individual to the achievement of a best self, however imperfect in certain ways that best self may turn out to be, is being used subtly to undermine the idea of effort. And one's relief at not being faced with one more naïve 'programme for action' is tempered by the feeling that the process of seeing through the current catch-phrases has its dangers as well as its virtues. As Mr. Eliot himself states 'Where scepticism is strength, pyrrhonism is weakness'; there is a hint that in Mr. Eliot's scepticism, the process of transfer may have begun.[5]

Yet the conception of a society which is indeed far removed from many current social notions gives Mr. Eliot an independence of outlook which makes him an acute critic of current educational inadequacies. The fact that the type of social organization that he feels is a necessary pre-requisite to the achievement of a high state of culture is one that in the present state of social feeling has little or no likelihood of coming into being is no excuse for not heeding the warnings that his insight provides. He reminds us that we have substituted the notion of education in the abstract—purveyed through a system of education—for what should be a unified educational process of home, social environment and school. 'For the schools can transmit only a part of culture and they can only transmit this part effectively, if the outside influences, not only of family and environment, but of work and play, of newsprint and spectacles and entertainment and sport are in harmony with them' (p. 101). Hence, he says, 'Education in the modern sense implies a disintegrated society, in which it has come to be assumed

[5]In fairness to Mr. Eliot, it should be stated that there are moments when he hints at possible lines of action. Thus he states that 'we cannot directly set about to create or improve culture—we can only will the means which are favourable to culture', though he nowhere indicates precisely what the distinction involves. *Cf.* too, pp. 19-20. Again, while he concerned to fix the means which are most favourable to a high state of culture, he does not necessarily wish to imply that those means are socially desirable as ends. *Cf.* pp. 108-9.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that there must be one measure according to which everyone is educated simply more or less. Hence *Education* has become an abstraction' (p. 105). It is a mistake, he thinks, to make all members of the community share the same basic education. 'To aim to make everyone share in the appreciation of the fruits of the more conscious part of culture is to adulterate and cheapen what you give . . . A "mass-culture" will always be a substitute culture' (p. 107). This is a point of considerable importance at a time when the idea of a basic course, implied in the American comprehensive school (which has its advocates in this country) and recommended in the recent Harvard report, receives increasing attention. Even the differentiation between secondary grammar, modern and technical schools tends to be blurred by the notion inherent in any large-scale democratic society, which, by treating each man as equally capable of exercising a vote, demands implicitly that each man shall be afforded the 'education' which shall fit him for that object. And as the abstract political notion of the voter, in an age when we are dominated by abstract political notions, has replaced the concrete reality of the individual human being in so many minds, it is only natural that the education so conceived should tend towards an abstract uniformity which such ideas as 'parity of esteem' have brought about. Thus the political need to proclaim as equal what at the very least would be demonstrably different leads to the necessity of attempting, as far as possible, to conceal even that difference. Mr. George Tomlinson has recently pronounced:

> 'We don't want children to grow up as historians only, or as teachers or housewives or factory workers only. We want them also to grow up and be educated as citizens with a proper sense of values, and able to understand and interpret and give service to the community, and as persons who have perception and appreciation of those things which have nothing to do with earning a living or with the machinery of society—persons who can enjoy the world of art, music, literature and so on'.

It is of course hard to attach any precise meaning to such blanket phraseology. But it might at least be pertinent to ask whether, for instance, there is any *necessary* distinction between, say, fulfilling the functions of a housewife and being a citizen with a proper sense of values (whatever they may be); or whether there are not some women who might become very good citizens with entirely adequate senses of value through seeking further perfection in the duties proper to a housewife. Again, might not the 'culture' proper to a good housewife be preferable, to an entirely inadequate smattering of knowledge of the world of art, music, etc. (Though that is not to argue that those housewives who are capable of appreciating more self-conscious arts should be prevented from doing so). It is easy to see that the abstract notion of the citizen and the cultured person (implying a self-conscious,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

artistic culture) has got in the way of Mr. Tomlinson's ability to see the cultural value of being a good historian, teacher, housewife or even a factory worker. It is the same outlook which is at present producing the distaste for specialization. Education, says Mr. Tomlinson, 'must be for the whole of life, not just for one aspect of it'—a notion which has at least a respectable ancestry in Arnold, with his notion of 'a harmonious perfection only to be won by unreservedly cultivating many sides in us'. One of the difficulties arises, of course, from the inability to distinguish between different sorts of specialisms. Thus to specialize, say, in English literature would produce a very different and much more harmonious personality in Arnold's meaning of the term, than would concentration on some minute aspect of scientific investigation. And it is usually to be noted that when specialization is condemned, it is usually specialization in science that is intended. The fact, however, that every man has become a citizen of a state rather than the member of a class or of a trade or craft means that he can no longer seek his satisfactions within the restrictions which the specialization within a class or trade allowed—and there is no longer a coherence between his work and his play: education for leisure has therefore become essential, and in leisure a man loses his identity, and becomes merely an abstraction, to acquire such superficial knowledge about 'art, music, literature and so on' as his nature will allow. And as many natures will not allow very much, a stereotyped art, music and literature have grown up, which, because they in no way relate themselves to the life lived by the individual, have come to depend for their appeal on an abstract of the stereotyped emotional attitudes that the majority of the people may be assumed to have. Thus, in a sense, what may be a solution is not less specialization but more; so that the potentialities of the specializations may be the more fully explored and the culture may be intimately related to the group life of the individual and not the imposed generalized notion of culture that serves to relieve, at present, the tedium of leisure. Such a notion, at least, presents itself as a possible approach to the question of what to do with the less self-conscious classes. And thus, too, the excesses both of those who regard education as a matter entirely for individual self-expression, and those who look to a single basic educational system will be avoided.

What has been said in this article must be regarded as random reflections rather than an ordered coherent attempt to deal with the educational implications of Mr. Eliot's point of view. To attempt the latter would require more space than a review would allow. But this at least can be said: whatever objections can be urged against Mr. Eliot's thesis—and it would not be difficult to urge several—what he asks are the fundamental questions, and I can think of no educational book in recent years which has shown such an awareness of them.

G. H. BANTOCK.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMERICAN CRITICS AND POETIC DRAMA

THE LANGUAGE OF TRAGEDY, by Moody E. Prior (*Columbia University Press. London, Geoffrey Cumberlege,* 27/6).

THIS GREAT STAGE: IMAGERY AND STRUCTURE IN KING LEAR, by Robert B. Heilman (*Louisiana State University Press,* $3.50).

RHETORIC AS A DRAMATIC LANGUAGE IN BEN JONSON, by Alexander H. Sackton (*Columbia University Press. London, Geoffrey Cumberlege,*).

It is becoming more and more difficult to keep up with the output of critical works from the American university presses. Catalogues and advertisements leave no doubt as to the thoroughness and industry with which the various fields are being covered. Three books on various aspects of poetic drama offer the opportunity to test the quality of some of this work, and prompt one or two general reflections. On the whole, the American writers seem to be more eclectic in their references to existing criticism on the same subject: there would appear to be a less marked tendency for them to fall into academic or social groups and coteries and to ignore work suggesting an unconventional or unfamiliar approach. Generally speaking they appear more receptive to new ideas, at any rate on the surface, and more willing to apply them both intensively and extensively. Professor Heilman expatiates on the imagery and structure of *King Lear* for some three hundred pages: Professor Prior covers the period from *Gorboduc* to the present day with heroic comprehensiveness. The idea that poetic drama is not merely drama in verse would seem to have become a fairly well accepted principle in America. And yet the final impression is disappointing: one feels that in the end far less is achieved than the pretensions warrant. If the American academic manner in criticism is free from some characteristic English defects, if it is more serious, less prone to elegant dilettantism, it has its own lapses, its own type of dulness and inadequacy. Some of these may arise from the greater pressure upon American university teachers to publish books: if a similar productivity were expected in this country it is difficult to believe that the results would be more satisfactory.

The Language of Tragedy begins promisingly with a discussion of 'The Nature of the Problem' which states the main point fairly: 'Had the tragedies of Shakespeare and of the ancients not been poetic tragedies, the impression of depth and vividness which their characters convey would have been impossible'. The long chapter on 'The Elizabethan Tradition' discusses Archer's attacks, Mr. Eliot's answer, the tendency to explain everything as contemporary dramatic convention, and the tendency to abandon strictly dramatic aspects as trivial. Professor Prior's general position is that the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nature of Elizabethan dramatic entertainment was such that only comprehensive genius or stern artistic conscience could achieve a completely integrated work of art within it. After a somewhat pedantic account of imagery and patterned speech in *Tamburlaine* and *The Spanish Tragedy* he turns to Shakespeare, taking *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear* as specimens. His discussion of imagery in *Romeo and Juliet* is again not sufficiently controlled by a sense of critical relevance. Patterns of repeated imagery can no doubt be discovered in almost any work, but if their analysis is not to seem niggling the critic must effectually convince us of their significance in an adequate reading of the whole. The section on *King Lear* relates the imagery more convincingly to the larger themes from which it is generated. Passing on to Shakespeare's contemporaries, Professor Prior distinguishes well between verse used merely as a current mode (Heywood), as a superficial means for isolated poetic effects (Beaumont and Fletcher) and as a true artistic convention. On the work of the other major Jacobeans his comments are not very original: he omits Middleton, over-rates Webster and does rather less than justice to *The Revenger's Tragedy*. On Jonson's tragedies he could learn something from Dr. Sackton, and he seems not to have read the work of Professor Knights.

The rest of the book deals with 'Tragedy and the Heroic Play', 'Nineteenth-century Tragedy' and 'The Present Age'. The middle chapters tend to be as dull as their subjects. It is not that Professor Prior really makes any unusual claims for Byron or Tennyson as dramatists, or even for Dryden, but one doubts the need for such elaborate and painstaking analyses to support the conventional judgments. He thinks that in *All for Love* Dryden for once achieved some success in 'the union of the poetical resources of language and the requirements of the dramatic form', but the discussion is not very persuasive. And was it necessary to examine the imagery of *Aurengzebe* at such length in order to arrive at the conclusion that it has no special function? Again, Professor Prior sees the derivative nature of *The Cenci* without drawing the obvious conclusions: he thinks that Shelley's poetic power gives it a kind of lyric unity. The analyses of dramas by Byron, Tennyson and Browning succeed eventually in reaching a satisfactory statement of their limitations and may be of use to specialist students, but one feels that the important points could have been made with far less labour. On 'The Present Age' we are given a conscientious survey from Ibsen onwards, with some tendency to over-estimate the realistic drama's total achievement, and an account of the various reactions towards expressionism and attempts to revert to verse. No one is likely to quarrel with the conclusion that we in this age have not yet solved the problem for ourselves. But Professor Prior finds too many dramatists worth taking seriously, and he shows little realization of the fact that a living drama pre-supposes a community life which at present can be found only in the most fragmentary approximations: a full consideration of the problems would lead beyond criticism to cultural history and sociology.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Professor Heilman is familiar with 'the techniques of poetic analysis that have come into general use during the last two decades' and he attempts to apply them in a thorough analysis of *King Lear*. He is concerned 'not with the mere anthologizing of images and the classification of them by subjects' in Miss Spurgeon's manner but with the structures of meaning to which images contribute, together with direct references to a given theme and related symbolic incidents or actions. Thus he finds in the play certain main themes—blindness, disorder in nature, nakedness, mental disorder—which attain symbolic value because they are each prepared for by a pattern of related images and references. Gloucester's blindness is 'imbedded in a field of meanings centred in the concept of seeing'—a sight pattern which leads metaphorically to the problem of insight. Edgar's nakedness is the focus of a pattern of clothes imagery—clothes as 'defence or encumbrance or pretence'. The storm, a 'convulsion of nature', is related to a far-reaching series of inquiries into both human nature and the natural order, which are reinforced by a complex of animal imagery and the recurring theme of sex. The question of naturalness and unnaturalness is clearly connected with the further problem of justice, and so, via imagery of age and injury, and of values and valuation, with central problems of right and wrong. Similarly there are constant references to reason and madness long before madness becomes an actual issue: the whole series forms 'a questioning of the nature and sufficiency of the rational man'. Finally there is the consideration of man's relation to the universe as a whole which gives a pattern of references to the gods. He concludes that *King Lear* is 'finally a play about the ways of looking at and assessing the world of human experience': the shrewd worldly group of characters reach only a superficial understanding of things: the apparently helpless and incompetent come to profound insights.

So much is set out in summary form in the first chapter, giving, as the author recognizes, little more than a skeleton of the play. The value of the book must depend on the actual analysis in which the various patterns are traced for inspection, and here one has to confess to some disappointment. Professor Heilman has something of interest to say on all the main themes noted above and a critical reader could derive useful hints from most chapters. But the 'scientific' thoroughness ultimately defeats its own object; insufficiently controlled by sensitiveness of response, it catalogues all references to a theme without adequate attention to their varying degrees of significance. 'Meaning', in fact, comes to be too much a matter of sense alone, and the analysis does not allow for the simple fact that one reference to a theme may be much more potent emotionally than another. It is noticeable that Professor Heilman has little to say about the effects of rhythm upon imagery, and upon poetic meaning in general. A simple illustration of these criticisms may be found in his chapter on 'The Gods Are Just' with which one may compare Mr. Wilson Knight's treatment of the same subject in the chapter on 'The Lear Universe' in *The Wheel of Fire*.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Professor Heilman appears to take every slightest reference to the gods as of equal significance: Mr. Wilson Knight distinguishes carefully, finding many quite perfunctory in tone but some clearly more important. For all its merits, *This Great Stage* shows how easy it is for analysis to be pushed beyond the point where it loses touch with the actual experience of the work of art: a too thorough and schematic tidiness may be as misleading as undisciplined impressionism. To some extent one feels that expansion into a full-length book has blurred the main points of the discussion and that they might have been made more effectively in a fairly long essay.

In Dr. Sackton's book, too, there is a certain amount that looks like scholarly padding. But on the whole he has gained by being less ambitious. In an introductory chapter on the approaches to Ben Jonson he shows that his own approach derives largely from Mr. Eliot and Professor Knights. Sharing their opinion of Jonson's greatness, he has been led to inquire into the part played by rhetoric in his dramatic method. After a somewhat jejune outline of the tradition of rhetoric he goes on to discuss its uses in Elizabethan literature in general and especially in drama. His main chapters deal with the deliberate use by Jonson of technical jargon (culminating in *The Alchemist*) and hyperbole (especially in the Roman plays and *Volpone*). The latter section is prefaced by a discussion of the relatively simpler use of hyperbole in Kyd and early Marlowe, for contrast, and of the approach to Jonson's method in *The Jew of Malta*. In these chapters Dr. Sackton is able to contribute some useful passages of analysis of particular scenes, especially of *The Alchemist*, which has not received much close critical attention. He has perhaps pushed his thesis about as far as it will go, and in the concluding chapter, which contrasts Jonson's use of language for ironical purposes with that of Shakespeare, he has ignored, I think, some difficult questions—such as the effect of speeches like the opening of *Henry IV* (Part I) and some of those in *Henry V* and *Coriolanus*: again, has the deliberate use of hyperbole any bearing upon Othello's rhetoric? But the book does contribute something to our reading of Jonson, and it provides scholarly backing for the critical insight of others.

R. G. Cox.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CROSS CURRENTS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY MUSIC

MAHLER: *Lieder Eines Fahrenden Gesellen* (Eugenia Zareska with L.P.O. under van Beinum). Decca.

MEDTNER: Society issue Vol. I (Second Piano Concerto, piano pieces and songs. Philharmonia Orchestra conducted Dobrowen, the composer and Oda Slobadskaya). H.M.V.
Vol. II Piano Concerto No. 3, Sonata Vocalise, Improvisation.

IRELAND: Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano (Frederick Grinke and the composer). Decca.

DELIUS: *Brigg Fair* (R.P.O. conducted Beecham). H.M.V.

BAX: *The Garden of Fand* (R.P.O. conducted Beecham). H.M.V.

STRAUSS: *Metamorphosen* (Vienna Philharmonic conducted von Karajan). Columbia.

DEBUSSY: *Jeux, poème dansé* (Orchestra of the Augusteo Rome, conducted de Sabata). H.M.V.

RAVEL: Concerto for piano left hand and orchestra (Robert Casadesus with Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy).

RAVEL: *Alborado del gracioso* (Dinu Liputti). Columbia.

STRAVINSKY: *Le Sacre de Printemps* (Concertgehouw of Amsterdam under von Beinum). Decca.

STRAVINSKY: Concerto in D for strings (Halle, conducted Barbirolli). H.M.V.

ROUSSEL: *Petite Suite* and Fauré *Pavane* (Orchestra de la Societe du Conservatoire de Paris, conducted Munch). Decca.

BRITTEN: Interludes from *Peter Grimes* (L.S.O. conducted Sargent). Columbia.

BRITTEN: *The Rape of Lucrezia* (English Opera Group, conducted Reginald Goodall). H.M.V.

BARKELEY: Divertimento (London Chamber Orchestra, conducted Anthony Bernard).

BUSH: *Dialectic* for string quartet (Aeolian Quartet). H.M.V.

ELIZALDE: Violin Concerto (Christian Ferras with Orchestra conducted Gaston Poulet). Decca.

TIPPETT: String Quartet No. 2 (Zorrian Quartet). Decca.

BARBER: Symphony No. 1. Columbia.

BLOCK: String Quartet No. 2 (Griller Quartet). Decca.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One can no longer complain about the quantity of Modern Music being issued by the recording companies. One can complain of a certain capriciousness in the selection of works, and one would like to see some systematic attempt to record what one might call the established classics of twentieth-century music. But I suppose the recording companies might retort that they do not know what the established classics are and that, in the multifarious variety of twentieth-century techniques, they are not sure who could tell them. Surveying the miscellaneous bevy of works listed above one must admit that there is some excuse for caution. Have the musical idioms of a mere fifty years ever before shown such baffling diversity? How can one hope even to establish any chronological development, when one considers the dates at which these works were written? Will they appear quite so ill-assorted to the historian o fthe future or will they have been ironed out by time not to a coherently consistent style like classical baroque or Mozartian *galant* but at least to a grey monotone of Twentieth-Century Music? I have just been attempting to write a chapter on the Techniques of the Twentieth Century for a work of musical history. I should be interested to know whether a historian of the twenty-first century will find this task as difficult as I did.

The first six works on the list belong in spirit and technique to the last years of the nineteenth century, though the last of them was written in 1945. The Mahler has a classical maturity of utterance because although an end, it is the end of a great and specific tradition. It is not among the most important of Mahler's works, but one has only to put it beside the Ireland Sonata to realize the value of an inherited tradition which is also an inherited civilization. I suppose the Ireland is remarkable 'for the time at which it was written', yet it has no more than a period air at this date; it seems weak and sugary and 'Edwardian' in large inverted commas. One does not think of referring to the Mahler as 'Viennese' in the same slightly patronizing way; one accepts Mahler's idiom as a part of the European tradition. It needed a genius of Delius's stature to overcome the provincial inspidity of Edwardian musical culture; and he did so only by turning his back on his society, creating a music that yearned for a vanishing world. *Brigg Fair* is a quintessential Delius piece making a characteristic use of variation form. The Bax work is similiar to the Delius in technique and in intention, only whereas Delius evokes memories of the countryside and his own childhood, Bax deliberately evokes a fabulous never-never land —the Celtic twilight in which, as a *Radio Times* note once charmingly put it, 'Bax has been lost for the last twenty years'. It is, perhaps music of remarkable talent as compared with Delius's genius, but Bax's talent has seldom manifested itself with more luscious imaginativeness. This is a fine example of an unfashionable kind of music. Like the Delius, it is superbly played and recorded. The early Ireland work is also admirably performed. In the Mahler the singer is a little aggressive.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There is an element of nostalgia in the music of Medtner too, but it is less strongly marked than in Delius's and Bax's work. He is still composing in a full-blown nineteenth-century romantic style which is 'late' in its almost superabundant richness and luxuriance but makes no concession to modernity. The noble bearing and staggering virtuosity of his music suggest a more sensitive and rhythmically subtle Rachmaninov and one hopes that these records will help to introduce him to the wider public which would certainly enjoy his music if it had the chance to hear it. One must deprecate, however, the ludicrous claims that have been made for Medtner in literature accompanying this recording venture. In Volume I the songs are beautiful and finely sung, the piano pieces rather dull, and the concerto highly impressive if you like that kind of thing, with a powerful first movement that musi be accounted a good piece of music by any standards. In Volume II the third concerto, written as recently as 1945, is less opulent, more fashionably austere than the second, but contains no music up to the level of the earlier work's first movement. The Sonata Vocalise is an experiment in the combination of a wordless coloratura part with Medtner's habitual intricate pianism. It is well written, but overlong for its musical substance. All the Medtner records are worth hearing for the composer's muscular and heroic piano playing, even if you find the music uncongenial.

The Strauss *Metamorphosen* is interesting. Written in 1945 it is none the less a continuation of the technique and æsthetic of *Tristan*, comparable with Schoenberg's moving *Verklarte Nacht*. Its technique is that of a continuous harmonic and melodic generation from a few seminal motives. The polyphonic texture of the writing for twenty-three strings is of extraordinary opulence, and the repeated use of enharmonic trasitions imbues the voluptuous chromaticism with a strange, ghostly unreality. It is a 'tragic' complement to the ghostly comedy of the Oboe Concerto reviewed previously. Powerfully melancholy and valedictory, it is, in relation to *Tristan*, an epilogue to an epilogue. It is extremely disturbing music though the disturbance is hardly pleasurable and perhaps not very 'valuable'. Certainly I wouldn't agree with those who call it a *great work*. But it should be listened to. It marks the end of an era; and its technical virtuosity dazzles. The performance seems sympathetic.

In the next batch of works we may group the Debussy, the Ravel and the Roussel. *Jeux* is one of Debussy's last works, against the conventional valuation of which I've often put in a protest. In this piece, however, the composer's peculiarly episodic and sequential structural methods are employed in so exaggerated a manner that the music seems unconvincing without the stage business it was designed to accompany. It is worth study, however, for its abundance, indeed superabundance, of effects of texture and sonority; what a magnificent composer for the films Debussy would have made! This highly sophisticated use of line and colour is found too in both the Ravel and Roussel. The Ravel Concerto

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has always seemed to me one of the most fascinating of the composer's later elegantly exotic works, and this version is strongly to be recommended. The Roussel Suite is somewhat self-parisitic and pedestrian, at least after the first movement. The fill-up of the lovely Fauré *Pavane* is inferior to the recent Columbia version in that it omits the brief but effective choral part.

These works—the Ravel Concerto most convincingly—show an attempt to discipline chromatic resource by a re-creation of classical structures. The Stravinsky *Sacre*—this time undoubtedly one of the established masterpieces—was also a reaction against chromatic disintegration in so far as it insisted with fanatical violence on the validity of metre. In the long run, such insistence had much the same effect as chromaticism; it destroyed traditional ideas of tonal coherence, and after it Stravinsky was forced to tackle the problem of the reintegration of line. We can observe Stravinsky trying to solve this question of formal integration in a chaotic world, all through his 'neo-classic' works of which the Concerto in D is a recent but not very distinguished example. In so doing he has created some fine music, notably the Symphonie des Psaumes and the Symphony in Three Movements, but we may doubt whether his re-creative genius has ever manifested itself with quite such authority as did his destructive genius in *Le Sacre*. It is interesting that at this date the relation of *Le Sacre* to Debussy seems unambiguous enough. The performance and recording of this still cataclysmic work are superb. The wry Concerto leads the Hallé into a somewhat finical performance.

The late works of Stravinsky have clearly suggested to Lennox Berkeley some of the exquisite noises which occur from time to time in his *Divertimento*. This piece does not seem to me, however, to be up to the standard of Berkeley's finest recent work, such as the *Stabat Mater*; the incidental noises are delightful, but they are not justified by a sustained melodic invention, so that the music sounds rather parasitic, suggesting now Roussel, now the final works of Debussy. Tippett's second Quartet could never be mistaken for the work of anyone else. It still seems to me an important work, though I am beginning to wonder if its rhythmic complexities, which are so largely the secret of its personal manner, don't in the long run defeat their own ends. There is a chance that they may cease to stimulate, as they cease to defeat, one's expectation. The finest passages in the third Quartet seem to be recovering a more stable rhythmic norm, without any sacrifice of Purcellian and madrigalian intensity.

Britten is so much a man of the theatre that I doubt whether the recording of two-thirds of *The Rape of Lucretia* gives an adequate notion of the music except to those familiam with the stage version. But it is admirably done by the Glyndebourne company. It might have been better to have started with *Herring*, I think, which ought to become a part of the established repertoire, for it is not only 'clever' but very funny and brimming over with Good Tunes. But again you can't really take it out of the theatre,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and that is a strength rather than a weakness, at this stage at least in the composer's development. The Interludes from *Grimes* also lose much by being divorced from their context. In this case they are not very sensitively played.

Bush's *Dialectic* is about as untheatrical as a work could well be, but it is a fine piece for which one's liking as well as one's respect grows the better one knows it. It is an early experiment in the completely thematic technique which Bush has adopted consistently in his recent works. One of these pieces, notably the *English Suite* for strings or the lovely *Winter Journey* cantata for soli, string quartet and harp, might perhaps have made a more grateful introduction of Bush to the gramophone public; but one is glad to have *Dialectic* which wears well because it is honestly felt and logically argued, in musical terms.

Whatever its deficiencies in charm, the Bush piece has everything which Elizalde's concerto hasn't. This work of a pupil of Falla is not obstreperously Spanish—the most obvious influence is the admirable one of Milhaud's *Cincertino de Printemps*—and brims over with charm of an unpretentious nature. But although each movement starts off with a delightful idea and has many elegant touches of orchestration, the work has no composition. The initial ideas are succeeded by amiable passage work; the pretty scenery on each side of the path does not disguise the fact that the path leads nowhere. These records are chiefly remarkable for the phenomenal fiddling of Christian Ferras, who is said to be only fourteen. Seldom have I heard such brilliance of attack and such scrupulous intonation in multiple stopping. It looks as though he will be in the Heifetz class.

An eighteenth-century composer with considerably less talent than Elizalde could not have produced so directionless a work; still less could he have produced so emotionally inflated a one as Barber's Symphony. I have never been able to see anything in Barber's music except perhaps for the unpretentious *Dorer Beach*. Several American musicians whose opinion I respect have told me I was wrong about him, so I listened to this work carefully and hopefully. It still seems to me a crude and hysterical bit of melodrama, grievously overscored.

Nothing could reveal its shabby pretentiousness better than to put it beside Bloch's second Quartet, magnificently played by the Griller Quartet. Bloch is a highly intense and rhetorical composer whose music has sometimes degenerated to hysteria. But it was always passionately human and honest, never attitudinizing. Here the cruder violences are purged away; the slow fugato passages seem to me the most intensely moving music Bloch has given us, with a nervously chromatic line worthy of comparison with the subtlest linear writing of Bartok and Berg. I'm still not so sure about the frantic metrical passages, though they are here convincingly absorbed into the structure. In any case this is a work of consequence.

W.H.M.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'HUMANITAS'

As most *Scrutiny* readers probably know, *Humanitas* is a quarterly review, inaugurated at Manchester, and contributed to mainly by teaching members of universities. Its title suggests well enough the function it proposes for itself—the function of vindicating, in a non-specialist intellectual organ, the idea of a university as a humane centre. Such an undertaking clearly deserves to succeed. The numbers of *Humanitas* to hand may fairly be taken as justifying the promoters' claim for support—even if one dissents from Bro. George Every's view of Charles Williams as a distinguished and improving writer, and deplores the critical approach that permits this kind of thing:

> 'The younger poets who came to light in 1937-42, such voices as Dylan Thomas, David Gascoyne, Alex Comfort and Sidney Keyes, have never suffered from any illusions about the future of our civilization'.

(Bro. George Every's part in establishing certain authors tends to make one think that Christian Discrimination is decidedly a thing to be discouraged).

Humanitas needs more support if it is to continue publication: 16/- a year, post free. Subscriptions should go to Dr. W. Schenk, *Humanitas*, University College, Exeter.

AN AMERICAN SELECTION FROM 'SCRUTINY'

Readers may be interested to know that, under the title *The Importance of 'Scrutiny'*, a large volume of selected *Scrutiny* work has been brought out in America. The Editor, Mr. Eric Bentley, contributes an introductory essay. The volume is published by George W. Stewart, New York, at $5.75.

Readers should be warned that, among the many misprints, there are some distressingly plausible and insidious ones.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED